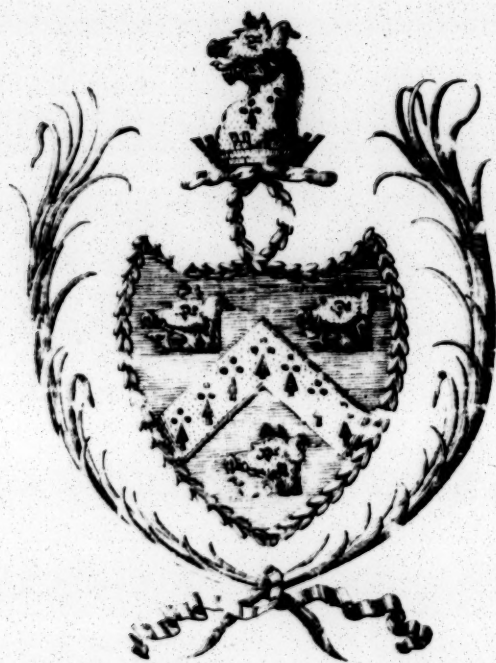




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SERMONS

ON THE

Following SUBJECTS.

VIZ.

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|--|---|
| Of moral and natural evil. | The glory of God best promoted by the moral rectitude and happiness of his Creatures. |
| Of the true principle of virtue. | The folly of imitating popular and fashionable vices. |
| Of the nature, Divine original, and authority of conscience. | The sublimity and extent of Christian Morals. |
| The plea of an erroneous conscience distinctly consider'd, and argued. | Of sincerity, as oppos'd to prejudice. |
| The influences of the Spirit entirely persuasive and moral; and its fruits of the same kind with the dictates of natural Conscience. | Of the true idea and improvement of Human Life. |
| Of Anger. | The kingdom of God, under the dispensation of the Gospel, not an external and ritual, but a moral constitution. |
| The time when Christianity was made known proved to be the <i>fittest</i> , from the state and circumstances of the World. | Universal charity the essence and life of religion. |
| The wisdom of God in the various ranks and subordinations of Human life. | The peculiar guilt and infamy of prevailing wickedness in an enlighten'd and polite age. |

By JAMES FOSTER.

VOLUME II.

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And

C O N T E N T S.

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S E R M O N I.



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Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights; with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.



IN this passage, St. James argues the goodness of the Supreme Being from the visible discoveries of it in his works; in the disposition and frame of *Nature*, and the general laws and operations of *Providence*---

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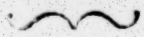
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But

Of moral and natural evil.

SERMON.

I.



But if God be absolutely and unchangeably good, how comes it to pass that there is so much *evil* in the world *? ---- This thought

* Some of the Antients seem to have thought, that there was no other possible method of explaining the present constitution, but by running into *Atheism*, and substituting *universal Fate* in the room of a *Providence*, or *wise moral government*. It is not my business, in the present argument, to confute this scheme of *Fatalism*; but only to try to account for the existence of *evil* in some different way, that is consistent with the belief and acknowledgment of a *Deity*: And this I have attempted in the following discourse. --- Others, again, had recourse to *two eternal independent Principles*, of contrary qualities and dispositions; one of whom they imagined to be the author of all the *good*, the other of all the *evil* in the universe. This was a chief article of the old *Magian* superstition; and seems to have been espoused by *Plutarch*, who ascribes it to several of the *Greek* philosophers. *Vide Cudworth's Intellectual System*, p. 213, &c. It was likewise the doctrine of the *Marcionites* and *Manicheans*, who were pretended Christians, tho' disowned and condemned by the Christian church. But *Zerdusht*, or, as the *Greeks* call him, *Zoroastres*, reformed the *Magian* scheme, by introducing one infinite self-existent Being, superior to the opposite Principles of *Light* and *Darkness*, whom he denied to be *first Causes*, and absolutely *independent*; and yet supposed, "That from the mixture of these, all good and evil sprung; that if these two had not been mixed together, the world had not existed; and that they rise against each other, and contend for victory, but in the end *light* shall conquer *darkness*, and *good* *evil*." And that he might not be charged with making the supreme God the author of evil, he taught, that this first and greatest of Beings

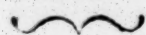
thought has naturally suggested itself both SERM.
to *studious inquirers*, and *sceptical cavillers*. I.

And the understandings of Men being narrow and confined, their passions too frequently unruly, and their prejudices against the principles of Religion, when they have been

Beings “ originally and really produced only *Light*; and
“ that *Darkness* followed it by consequence, followed it as
“ the shadow does the person.” *Hyde de Relig. Vet. Pers.*
p. 163 & 299. I need not attempt to confute this *Hypothesis*, because as the peculiarities of it are mere imagination and *fable*, and built on no one plain and certain principle of reason, this is a sufficient objection against admitting it to be the true account of the constitution and scheme of things. --- And to shew the absurdity of the *Manichean* doctrine of two independent Principles, it has been justly observed, that if two such Beings are consider’d as directly *opposing* each other, it is impossible for us to conceive, how either *good* or *evil* can exist; there being, on the one hand, just so much wisdom and power to *bind* the effect, as there is, on the other, to *produce* it. The only way to avoid this consequence is, by supposing them to be agreed, and to act in *concert*. And the *only imaginable ground* of such an agreement is a mutual consent, that the proportion of good and evil in the universe should be exactly *equal*. But we not only see, that a very great part of the *evil* which subsists in the world is caused by acting in direct opposition to *Nature*, and has a manifest tendency to *goad* upon the whole; but, as far as our experience and observation reach, the precisely *equal* mixtures of good and evil appear to be entirely chimerical; since the one, or the other, every where *preponderates*. --- The *Manichee* will perhaps say, that, notwithstanding this, there may be a *strict equality* observed with

S E R M.

I.



been habituated to evil practices, strong and violent ; they are apt, either through imperfect views of things, or the influence of corrupt appetites misleading and clouding the judgment, to account of all the *evils*, that happen in the creation, as so many *spots* and *blemishes* in the Divine government. And since these evils have not only been in former times, but are at this day,

respect to the universe in general. To which I answer, That, in just reasoning, it belongs not to *him* to have recourse to the supposition of what may be the case *upon the whole*, but to the asserter of *one* First Cause of all things. For the *only* foundation in reason for introducing *two* Principles is this, that the appearances of evil are *impossible* to be reconciled with the belief and acknowledgment of but *one* Principle, possess'd of perfect goodness. But this *impossibility* can never be proved, if all things *may*, upon the whole, tend to good ; which is therefore a supposition that the advocate for *one* Principle has a *right* to make. But, in the *natural course* of the argument, the *Manichee* ought not even to *assert* his opinion, and much less has he a right to defend it by putting cases of what may be the *universal* and *final* state of things, till he has shewn, that it cannot *possibly* be, nay, that it could not be *designed* to be, good upon the whole ; and, of consequence, that the appearances of evil, and the existence of *one good* cause of the entire frame and constitution of Nature, are *necessarily* inconsistent ideas, which destroy each other. — From whence it follows, by way of Corollary, That the barely shewing how it is *possible* that these ideas may be perfectly consistent, is a sufficient confutation of the *Manichean* doctrine.

urged

urged as a most formidable objection against the Supreme *wisdom* and *goodness*, and indeed against the very *being* of a God; I shall make this difficulty, which is apprehended to contain the main strength of the *Atheistic* scheme, the subject of the following discourse; and need use no other argument, besides the vast importance of it in itself, to engage your attention. *Evil* has been commonly distinguished into two kinds, *natural* and *moral*----I shall begin with an inquiry into the *origin* of *moral evil*, and endeavour to vindicate the Providence of God in the *permission* of it: And then, **SECONDLY**, I shall add a few observations concerning *natural evil*.

FIRST, I am to inquire into the *origin*, and endeavour to account for *permission*, of *moral evil*. This question has puzzled the greatest wits of antiquity; and, for many ages, confounded the reason and skill of Philosophers, un-enlightened and unassisted by revelation. But Christianity has presented us with an easy way of solving the difficulty with respect to *Mankind* (and the same may be applied to all *Intelligent*

B 3 *Beings*)

S E R M.

I.



Beings) by informing us that they are rational and *free* creatures, and that all moral evil springs entirely from *their own abuse* of their natural liberty. Directly to this purpose are the words of St. James a few verses before the text, where he expresses himself thus: *Let no Man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* Now that this is the *true* scheme, or in other words, that all those wrong determinations and pursuits, which constitute *moral evil*, were not *original* or *essential* to us, but owing to a *voluntary* abuse of our faculties, will appear to be very probable, if we set aside the arguments from the perfections of God, from taking a short view of Human nature itself. For what is *Human nature*? Is not this the right notion of it, *viz.* “a *rational principle* conducting “and governing the inferior passions?” And, therefore, when the passions prevail against reason, must there not be a *perverted* and *irregular*

Of moral and natural evil.

7

irregular state? Shall we form our idea of SERM.
Human nature from the *brutal* part of it, or I.
from the more noble and excellent, the *intellectual*?---*Nature* is a general term to
denote those laws by which the Creator governs the universe, and the *established*
order of things. Now this *order*, with respect to Mankind is, “ that the *understand-*
“ *ing*, and *reflection*, should preside over
“ the animal frame, and regulate its in-
“ *clinations* and *desires*.” So that whatever
in their temper or conduct is contrary to
the dictates of reason, whatever is evil and
vicious, is *inordinate*, and consequently
unnatural.

I ONLY desire it may be observed farther,
that I am not obliged in this part of my dis-
course to prove *the liberty of human actions*,
because all *moral evil* plainly supposes it;
and, on any other scheme, is no more than
a *weakness* and *imperfection* of Nature which
has nothing *criminal* in it. And therefore
the Scripture account of it must be the only
just account, if there be indeed any such
thing as *moral evil*, or any other besides
natural evil in the universe. Let us
now see how the Providence of God

SERM. may be vindicated, with respect to this
 I. corrupt and irregular scene of things.
 I only beg leave to premise, that I shall here content myself with making some plain and brief remarks directly relating to this question in particular; and reserve, to the latter part of this discourse, other more *general* considerations, which may be applied to the *whole* controversy about *evil*, and help to remove the difficulties that attend it.

THE *possibility* of moral evil necessarily follows from supposing *free agents* to exist, and that they are left to the *use* of their liberty. And since the latter is no more than suffering creatures to act agreeably to their faculties, and the law of their Nature; the whole inquiry is reduc'd within a narrow compass, and terminates in this single point---whether it be consistent with the perfections of God *to create free agents*. But now to which of the Divine attributes, can it be suppos'd, that the making Beings endued with liberty is repugnant? --- Not surely to *justice*, because such a being may be easily conceived to be vastly preferable to not being; nay, it may,
 in

in many circumstances, be a very *desireable* SERM.
and *eligible* state: For instance, where I.
the temptations to vice are so few and in-
considerable, that they are not likely to
have much influence. And, consequently,
'tis so far from being in *general* inconsistent
with the notion, that the great Author and
Governor of the world is a *righteous*, or even
a *benevolent* being; that it may *itself* be a
convincing and undeniable demonstration
of his *goodness*. If it be urged, that al-
lowing it may prove the Deity to be bene-
volent, it is not, however, the wisest way
of pursuing *the good of the whole*; I answer,
How is it *possible* that we should know
that? Are we capable of comprehending
the vast designs of an Infinite mind? Or
can we judge distinctly of all the *ends* and
uses that may be answer'd in the *universe*
of Beings, even by creating free agents
of *different* orders and degrees?-----Objec-
tions of this kind, which are in truth not
levell'd against the *goodness* of God, but
against his *wisdom* only, in taking the most
proper methods to promote the general
happiness, are attempts to argue where we
have *no principles* to proceed upon; and
must

SERM. must therefore be extremely rash and arrogant. So that this short view of the case is sufficient to convince us, that the *general* notion of *free agency*, and, in consequence of that, of *the possibility of moral evil*, is neither a reasonable objection against the *existence* of a First Cause of all things absolutely perfect; nor against the belief of a wise and a gracious providence.

Rom. v.
12.

BUT I am inclin'd to think, that, even in the opinion of those who urge this difficulty, the chief strength of it does not lie here. I shall therefore go on to vindicate the conduct of Providence, with respect to *the original of evil* in the present circumstances of Mankind, according to the explication which the Christian religion has given of it, *viz. that by one man sin enter'd into the world, and death by sin*: The true account of which I take to be this. That *Adam*, who was form'd perfect according to the *degree* of Human nature, with a healthful body, and a clear and vigorous mind, his *reason* having an entire command over his *affections*, wilfully violated the law of his *trial*; the punishment of which, by the wise appointment of the Creator, was

death.

Of moral and natural evil.

II

S E R M.

I.

death. Immediately upon this, and perhaps as the *natural effect* of the transgression itself, his bodily constitution became disordered, and had in it the seeds of *corruption* and *mortality*. And now being himself *distempered*, and liable to *death*, he could convey no other than a *mortal* body to his offspring. This distemper in our *animal frame* must of necessity affect the *mind*, considering the closeness and intimacy of their union. For experience teaches us, that bodily disorders, arising from a corrupt state of the blood and humours, and causing irregular motions in the *sensitive* part, do in some degree cloud the *understanding*, and inflame the *passions*; from whence arise *temptations* to vice, by which 'tis discovered, whether Men will be governed by *reason*, or *appetite*. And as this distemper is *various*, according to the *different methods* by which Mankind, since the first defection from the rectitude of Human nature, have corrupted themselves, and one another; there must of necessity be *various* inclinations, working more or less powerfully in different constitutions. --- It may now be ask'd, how it agrees with the moral per-

SERM.

I.



perfections of God, and especially with his *goodness*, to suffer all Mankind, through one offence, to which they were no way necessary, to fall under such *disadvantages* with respect to the practice of virtue, and such *temptations* to vice. This, I think, is the objection in its full force, which I now proceed to answer. Let it just be premised, that the difficulties which Mankind labour under, are not, upon this scheme, inflicted as a *proper punishment*, but are only the *unhappy consequences* of *Adam's* sin; and therefore, if it agrees in general with the perfections of God to place them in such a state, without any regard to their own demerit, it can make no difference, whether this be an *immediate act* of his Providence, or the *natural result* of that course of things which he at first established. And to vindicate the Divine conduct in this affair, let it be considered,

FIRST, That the *absolute goodness* of God does not oblige him to make all intelligent Beings of the most *perfect order possible*, endued with the highest degrees of *reason*, *liberty*, and *moral excellence*; but that there may be a *variety* in this as well as in other

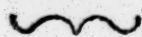
other species of creatures. For no one can doubt, but that the communication of *several* degrees of rational perfection, below the *highest of all*, is communicating a very great good; and, consequently, an undeniable proof of the *goodness* of the Creator.

SERM.
I.

SECONDLY, If it be suitable to our idea of the goodness of God, to make *various orders* of intelligent Beings, with *several* different powers and excellencies; how shall we set bounds to this *diversity*?-----Since none of us can pretend to be *certain*, I may indeed say, since we have not knowledge and experience enough on which to ground the *least probability*, that infinite wisdom, even in the pursuit of the main end of all the Divine administrations, the *general happiness*, is not most eminently displayed in the *greatest variety* of reasonable and free agents. Thus far then the argument seems plain----That *free agency* in general, and the natural consequence of it---The *possibility* of *moral evil*---That a *diversity* in the moral world----nay, that an *indeterminable variety*, with respect to the capacities and circumstances of free agents, can never be shewn *not to be best upon the whole*. As there-

SERM.

I.



therefore we can have no sure foundation on which to conclude, that the *lowest* degrees of intelligence and liberty are inconsistent with the absolute goodness of the First Cause, if we only consider the universe of rational Beings as *one system* or *constitution*, compounded of various parts; nothing remains, unless it be to prove

IN the THIRD place, that what we have suppos'd may be *wise* and *fit upon the whole* can be doing no real *wrong* or *injury* to *particulars*; or, in other words, that those free agents, who belong to the *lowest class*, have no cause to complain of being *unrighteously* dealt with. And if we will allow this fundamental principle of equity, “ That *nothing* “ can be expected from the various orders of “ intelligent Beings, but what is *propor-* “ *tion'd* to their several powers, and that “ *thus much* will be strictly required of *all*,” the point is clear beyond all reasonable contradiction. For if *four* degrees of *good* be required, where there are *four* degrees of *power*, and but *one* degree of *good* where there are is but *one* degree of *power*; and if the *one* degree of *power* be as capable of producing the *one* degree of *good*, as the *four* degrees

Of moral and natural evil.

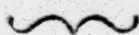
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degrees of *power* are of producing the *four* S E R M.
degrees of *good*, the two cases, in respect I.
of *just* and *fair* treatment, are brought
to an exact *equality*. And thus the diffi-
culties which Mankind at present labour
under are sufficiently accounted for. For still
reason is the superior principle capable of
regulating the passions; and *Man* is as *able*
to yield that service which is required of
of him, and exactly *proportioned* to his
strength, as *superior Intelligences* are *able*
to perform their larger and more extensive
duty. This, I say, with what went be-
fore, fully vindicates the conduct of Pro-
vidence so far as the controversy about
moral evil is concerned. But if reason, by
any unavoidable misfortune, be so weaken-
ed and impaired, that Men are not *morally*
intelligent, and *free*; this, as in the case of
Ideots, and all the actions that proceed from
it however wild and injurious, are only
natural evils: Which I now proceed,

IN the SECOND place, to consider. And
it may be thought the more needful, be-
cause, by my manner of treating the sub-
ject, a great deal of what has been ge-
nerally

SERM.

I.



nerally imagined to belong to *moral evil* has been thrown upon *natural*; and, consequently, the difficulty on that head is considerably increas'd. Let me just observe, before I come directly to the point, that it matters not, whether the evils complain'd of are immediately from the hand of God, or result from settled laws of nature; since in *both* cases they are his *determination* and *choice*, and equally necessary to be accounted for by every one who would defend his perfections. *Natural evils* may be reduc'd, either to those which are common to *all*, as well as absolutely necessary from the frame and constitution of the *universe*; or to *penal evils*; or else to such as are *occasioned* by Beings who *act freely*, and are the *voluntary* instruments of evil to one another. I shall propose a few observations relating to each of these.

IN the FIRST place, let it be observ'd, that nothing is *properly* an *evil*, which it is inconsistent with the perfections of God to *permit* or *appoint*, but what deserves that character *upon the whole*. And this we cannot pretend to say of any thing we are acquainted with; nor indeed of *any natural*

natural evils that are of a limited duration. SERM.

I.

It is very possible, that they may have a tendency to promote the more solid and durable happiness of *Individuals* (after several *intermediate* consequences, which we are too short-sighted to trace) as well as the *general good* of the Creation. Nor can we demonstrate, or even argue the contrary with any probability, unless we can likewise comprehend all the *infinite variety* of *designs* that an all-wise Being may intend to serve by *particular occurrences*, and thoroughly understand the *whole plan* of his government, the *connection* of the several parts of it, and their *reference* and *subordination* to each other. It must, at least, be past dispute, that what seems *wrong* in the present state may be *rectified* in some future scene of existence; and the present *pain* be vastly over-ballanc'd by the succeeding *pleasure*. And thus the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God, notwithstanding some dark and gloomy appearances, will be eminently display'd in the frame of the World. For nothing can rationally be esteem'd *such an evil*, as is an argument either of *injustice* or *cruelty* in the person

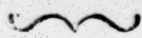
SERM. who appoints it, which has a natural tendency to *produce*, or by the same appointment will *be follow'd*, by a more extensive and lasting *good*. And this, we may fairly presume, will at last be found to hold true, with respect to all the *unavoidable evils* that any part of the Creation suffers.

LET it be farther observ'd, that a great deal of what we call *natural evil* springs from things that are of singular use, from *Air, Water, Fire, Lightning, &c*; which are absolutely necessary, in the present state, for the preservation of particular persons, the welfare of Societies, and to heighten our relish of pleasure and happiness. The appetites of *Hunger* and *Thirst* are uneasy sensations; but yet of great advantage to put us in mind when Nature is exhausted, and wants to be *repaired*, and to excite and quicken us to the support of the *animal life*. Our *painful* perceptions not only give us a *friendly warning* of the disorders of the bodily frame, but in a good measure point out the *nature* of them; and consequently direct to the right methods of *cure*. They render us more sensible of the value of a *healthful* state, and more careful to preserve

it; especially by avoiding those *irregular* and *unmanly* excesses, which, together with weakening the *Body*, corrupt and debase the *Mind*. To all which we may add, that the *miseries* we have endured, of any kind, make us more apt to *commiserate* our Fellowcreatures; and, by improving *benevolence* and *tender affections* in us, evidently subserve the general good. The *anxious concern* of *Parents* for the life and welfare of their *Children*, which is a strong passion that produces many *troublesome* reflections, has not only a manifest tendency to strengthen the sense of *Filial duty*; but provides, in the most effectual manner, for the *support* and *education* of those, who are able to take no care of themselves; without which the *World* would be soon *impeopled*, or degenerate into *ignorance* and *barbarity*. And even the most *excellent* passions of *Human nature*, which are the spring of all that is *great* and *generous*, and absolutely necessary to *virtuous* and *laudable* undertakings, must always suppose the *possibility* of pain and suffering. Thus, for example, the *love* of what is *excellent* and *amiable* must, in the nature of the thing,

S E R M.

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be succeeded by a *proportionable uneasiness*, when the object of this passion is withheld, or removed, from us. Not to mention, that the *barely* having such principles within us clearly implies in it, that, by *false* and *misplaced* affections, we may multiply the causes of our *misery*; and bring upon ourselves, and others, innumerable evils, besides what immediately spring from the *original* and *regular* state of Nature. And as it has been already prov'd, that it is consistent with the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God to create *free agents*, and place them in a state of *trial*; and as, in such a probationary state, *natural evils* are very proper for the *exercise*, *improvement*, and *confirmation* of our virtue; the consequence is plainly this, that they can be no just reproach to Providence; because it may fairly be presum'd, that they are appointed with a benevolent and gracious design, and if they are rightly improved, they may be a means to train us up, by a useful *moral Discipline*, for a *superior* state of existence, in which we shall enjoy the most exalted honour and felicity.

I AM next to suggest a few hints in defence

Of moral and natural evil.

21

SERM.

I.

fence of *Penal evils*. These are absolutely necessary to check the *growth* of *vice*; and, by that means, to secure the *rectitude* and supreme *happiness* of the moral Creation. For if reasonable Beings were suffered to go on in those irregular courses with *impunity*, which are unbecoming the dignity of their natures; the probable consequence would be bringing the eternal rules of virtue and righteousness into *contempt*, and introducing extreme *disorder* and *misery* into the World. It must be a vastly *less evil*, if it be *at all an evil* upon the whole, to take such seemingly harsh and severe methods to the great *pain*, or even to the *entire destruction*, of particular persons, than to suffer wickedness to triumph, and give corrupt and mischievous affections an unlimited scope, to the *confusion* and *ruin* of the whole Intellectual system. So that *Penal evils*, denoting not only the *positive punishments* which God may inflict on sinners, and the *Punishments* wisely inflicted by Human laws; but all those other *miseries*, which, either in *this life*, or throughout the *whole* of our existence, are the *natural effects* of vicious indulgences; *Penal*

SERM. evils, I say, which, in this extensive view,
 I. comprehend a very considerable part of the
 whole sum of *natural evils*, appear, for
 the reason above-mentioned, to be not only
consistent with the *wisdom* and *goodness* of
 the supreme Governour of Mankind; but to
 be *necessary* in the government of an abso-
 lutely perfect Being *. F1-

* IN order to judge the more clearly, whether it be
 consistent with the *goodness* of God to *punish* the iniquities
 and moral disorders of his creatures, it may be proper for
 us to consider in what manner it is probable he would act
 if he was a *malevolent* Being, who had it ultimately in his
 view to make his reasonable creatures miserable. — He
 sees that *vice*, in the nature of things, tends to their
misery; and *virtue* to their *happiness*. His business, there-
 fore, must be to enslave and corrupt their *virtue*, and give
 an unbounded licence to *irregular passions*. Would he then,
 can we think, promise a glorious *reward* to the practice
 of *moral goodness*, and threaten severe *punishments* to a life
 of *sin*? This can by no means be imagined, because it
 must defeat his main design. — Would an *unnatural Father*,
 who was resolved to *debauch* the manners of his children,
reprove or *correct* their extravagancies? Would a *Prince* bent,
 in order to *enfeeble* his people, on enfeebling and enervating
 their minds by *Idleness* and *Luxury*, *punish* these vices;
 or *encourage*, by marks of his peculiar favour, the contrary
 virtues of *Frugality*, *Temperance*, and *Industry*? The things
 themselves are plain contradictions. — In like manner,
 in the great *Community* of rational agents, if their supreme
 Governour was *ill-natured*, and delighted in their *misery*,
 he would be so far from manifesting an approbation of
virtue, and a displeasure against *vice*: that, on the con-
 trary, he must be strongly prompted to support the latter.

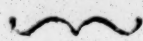
FINALLY, As to those evils, of which SERM. I. creatures that act freely are the *voluntary* causes, it may be said, that the *possibility* of them certainly follows on supposing *free agents* to exist---that the *permission* of them, if God can, as has been shewn, *wisely* form such Beings, must be entirely reconcileable with the most honourable idea we can form of him; since it is, in fact, nothing more than the leaving them to the *use* of their faculties---And that all the irregularities and mischiefs, which are thus occasion'd by the *abuse* of natural liberty, may be compleatly *rectified* in another state, and unspeakably to the advantage of the *innocent sufferer*.

I AM aware that it will be objected to what has been hitherto offer'd: That, indeed, the evils which we now behold, or ourselves endure, may be a means of procuring for us a greater good, and exceed-

and discountenance and oppress the former. So that to *penish* impenitent sinners is so far from being inconsistent with the *absolute goodness* of the Deity; "that it is his regard to the general good, which is the *only true reason* why they are *penish'd*." And it is highly probable that the case would be quite the reverse, if he was a *cruel* and *mischievous* Being.

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ingly over-ballanc'd by succeeding *pleasures* in a future life, that many *natural evils* may be useful, and even necessary, in the *present state*, and while mankind continue to be as they are, partly *Intelligent*, and partly *Animal*; and that, upon the supposition of *moral evil*, *penal* is fit and reasonable. But all this, though it be true, will not reach the main difficulty--- “ For
 “ what *need* was there, that such an *im-*
 “ *perfect* system of creatures should be
 “ brought into being? What *need* of
 “ *mere Animals*, with strong ungovern'd
 “ instincts, frequently tormenting to *them-*
 “ *selves*, and injurious, nay destructive,
 “ to others; even to *rational Beings*, of a
 “ superior order; who, in their turn, ty-
 “ ranize over, oppress, and are necessi-
 “ tated to destroy, the *Brute* creatures?
 “ What *need* of such a *diminutive* race
 “ of *Intelligent agents* as men are, im-
 “ prison'd in bodies that are a constant
 “ check to the vigorous operations of
 “ *reason*, and expose them to number-
 “ less *wants* and *miseries*? Creatures
 “ of such limited moral powers, such
 “ strong passions, prejudices, and contra-

“ ry inclinations; who by their *vices* may
“ bring the evil of *punishment* on them-
“ selves, and be the occasions of *infinite*
“ *calamities* to each other? Could not the
“ all-wise and almighty Author of the uni-
“ verse have made all his Intelligent crea-
“ tures so *perfect*, as that it should be utter-
“ ly *improbable*, that they would debase and
“ corrupt their own natures, or make their
“ own existence, or that of their fellow-
“ creatures, in any degree *miserable*?
“ Might not the inanimate material World
“ have been so framed, or at least so go-
“ vern’d, as not to cause *necessary* and
“ *unavoidable evil* to any of its rational
“ inhabitants? And though the present
“ scene of things should be allow’d to be
“ *consistent* with the *general notion* of
“ *goodness*; would it not have been more
“ worthy *supreme* and *infinite* goodness,
“ to have communicated to *all Beings* the
“ highest measures of happiness; or, at
“ least, never to have suffer’d such mov-
“ ing objects of *distress*, as common hu-
“ manity teaches us to *prevent*, or, if
“ that be beyond our power, always
“ strongly inclines us to *relieve*?” These
queries,

SERM. queries, in which the whole force of
 I. the objections relating both to *moral*
 and *natural* evil is collected, may seem
 very specious and plausible: But I hope
 they will be thought of no great mo-
 ment, when the following things are
 consider'd.

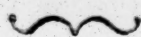
FIRST, That the possibility of *natural*
evil, in *some degree*, necessarily results
 from supposing any *finite* Beings at all to
 exist, though of the most excellent supe-
 rior order. For even such exalted crea-
 tures as these, through *imperfect* or *false*
views, to which every *finite* understanding
 is liable, may be *perplex'd* and *uneasy*
 themselves, and the occasions of *trouble*
 and *pain* to others. So that the com-
 municating a being, from whence there is
 a *possibility* that *evil* should arise, is not,
 in the *general* consideration of it, incon-
 sistent with the universal goodness of the
 Deity. However it will still be said, that
 there should be as little *imperfection* and *evil*
 as there can be. --- And therefore I add,

IN the SECOND place, That it has been
 already shewn in the former part of this
 discourse, that God is not obliged to create

no Beings but such as are of the highest order possible, and endued with the highest degrees of understanding and moral excellence; but that, without any blemish to his character, there may be, for any thing such short-sighted shallow reasoners as we are can prove to the contrary, an infinite variety; not only creatures of the lowest rank of Intelligents, but mere Animals of vastly different classes in the sensitive life; and, consequently, exactly such a universe as really exists. Nay, it is, I think, almost demonstrable, that a constitution so diversified may yield, upon the whole, the greatest good; and be therefore most worthy a Being supremely perfect.--- “ For it is possible, that “ there may now be as many of the highest “ order of Intelligences, as there would “ have been, if only that single order had “ been created. The number could not “ then have been, strictly speaking, infinite; since there can be no point of “ duration, in which the Deity, if not “ divested of his infinite wisdom and “ power, cannot create other Beings, possessed of the same capacities and excellencies. Or if the number could be “ infinite,

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“ infinite, what I have asserted will still
 “ hold true, viz. that it is *possible*, that there
 “ may now be as many of the *highest* order
 “ of Intelligences, as there *would have*
 “ been, if only that *single order* had been
 “ created. And should this which *may be*,
 “ actually be, the case with respect to the
 “ *highest* order; all the *other classes* of
 “ rational Beings, (in which we may fairly
 “ presume, from what we know of our
 “ *own Species*, that there is a much greater
 “ proportion of *happiness* than *misery* upon
 “ the whole) will be an *addition* to the
 “ sum total of *good*. Nay, if we suppose
 “ (which is, surely, a *possible* case likewise)
 “ that there are not only in the *highest*,
 “ but in *every other*, rank of Beings, rising
 “ in a regular gradation one above ano-
 “ ther, *as many* creatures as there would
 “ have been, if *each* of these orders had
 “ existed *alone*; the leaving out any spe-
 “ cies of *mere Animals* whose *pleasures*
 “ exceed their *pains*, (which, it is most
 “ reasonable to believe from what we
 “ clearly see of the *goodness* of the Creator,
 “ is, or *will be*, the case of *all*) must sub-
 “ tract

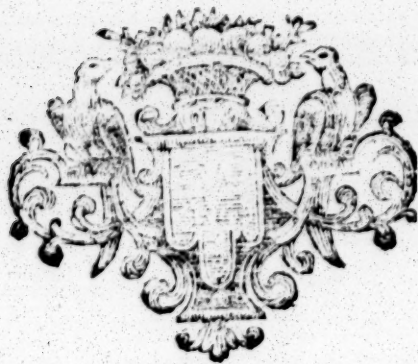
“ tract JUST so much from the *universal* SERM.
“ *happiness.*” † I.

LET us learn, from this discourse, to cultivate in our minds the highest reverence of God's moral character, and an honourable opinion of his Providence. Under the evils of life, let us behave with decency and resignation, and not give way to a peevish fullen discontent.---- If any are occasion'd by our own imprudence or wickedness, let us be taught more *discretion* by them, and a stricter adherence to the rules of *virtue*.--- And under those which are unavoidable, and spring, necessarily, from the establish'd frame and laws of Nature, let us compose ourselves with this rational and well-grounded reflection, that the *whole* scene of Human affairs is conducted by unerring *wisdom*, and upon

† The *possibility* of the cases here supposed, cannot, I think, be disputed. And if it cannot, it necessarily follows, that, notwithstanding the appearances of *imperfection* and *evil* in the world, there *may exist* a Being absolutely perfect, the *only* Creator of the universe, and *dispenser* of events; who may have form'd and order'd all things *for the best*. And if this only *may be* true, it follows as *necessarily*, that both *Atheism*, and the doctrine of *two Principles*, so far at least as they are built on *this objection*, are *groundless* and *arbitrary* schemes.

the

SERM. the maxims of most exact and impartial
I. *justice*. This thought will be of great use
to us, not only to preserve the *respect* that
is due to God, as our infinite Creator and
supreme Governour ; but to *alleviate* and
soften our cares, and render our afflictions,
of every kind, more *tolerable* : And, be-
sides, we may joyfully hope for a better
existence hereafter, in which all those
things, which are now so sorely complain'd
of as *irregularities* and *evils* in Human
life, will be perfectly rectified ; and that
happy condition introduced (at the most
fit and *proper* season) which, in our restless
and impatient hours we are apt to imagine,
ought to have been the *original* state of
the rational Creation.





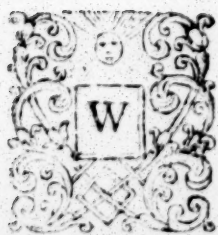
S E R M O N II.



Of the true principle of virtue.

P S A L M cxix. 97.

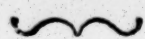
*O how love I thy Law! It is my
meditation all the day.*



THAT the *Psalmist* here says, S E R M.
II
~~~~~  
concerning himself, must, in  
some measure, be the senti-  
ment of every truly good  
Man:--- He *approves* of and  
*admires*, *esteems* and *prefers*, the rules of  
Virtue and true Religion, because of their  
intrinsic *equity* and *rectitude*.--- But Men  
are apt, from a certain train of thinking to  
which they have been long accusom'd, or  
a peculiar turn of disposition, to carry this  
to

SERM.

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to an *extreme* ; throwing a sort of *contempt* on every other *motive* and *principle* of virtue. Thus, to be moved by the hope of a *reward* is described as *debasing* moral goodness, and rendering it *vulgar* and *mercenary* ; and the being determin'd by *authority*, tho' it be the supreme and unquestionable authority of the *Creator* and *Lord* of the universe, in the opinion of the objector, is acting from a kind of *constraint*, and is therefore represented to be, at least in a *comparative* sense, *servile* and *ungenerous*. Whereas, in truth, an *authority* that is *fit* to be obeyed can include, in the idea of it, no more of *real constraint*, than *rules* that are *fit* to be observed, let them be consider'd in ever so *abstracted* a view. The influence of *both* is exactly the same in *kind* : They must only be consider'd as *motives*, which are *just* and *important* in themselves, and *proper* to work on *rational* Beings.

BUT if this be a wrong way of thinking, it has, however, its *opposite* errors. For there are some, again, who talk of scarce any thing but *rewards* ; as if virtue and piety little deserved to be chosen and pursued,  
for



for the sake of their own *loveliness* and *excellence*. --- And a party there still remains (different from each of these already mention'd) who describe the *regard* that is due to the *authority* of God, and the *obligation* to promote his *glory*, not only in a way discouraging to *virtue*, and the pursuit of *happiness*, but confused and incomprehensible. I shall, therefore, in the following discourse, endeavour to explain this whole matter impartially, and with all the distinctness I am capable of; by shewing,

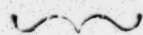
FIRST, That the love of virtue for itself, a regard to the authority of God, and a strong desire and earnest pursuit of private happiness, are perfectly *consistent* principles of action; and therefore ought not *absolutely*, and *in general*, to be *opposed* to each other.

SECONDLY, That they are all three *just* and *rational* principles. And,

THIRDLY, That they are not only consistent and rational, but *inseparably connected*.

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THE FIRST thing proposed was to shew, that the love of virtue for itself, a regard to the authority of God, and a strong desire and earnest pursuit of private happiness, are perfectly *consistent* principles of action; and therefore ought not *absolutely*, and *in general*, to be *opposed* to each other. It would be mere trifling to attempt to prove, that men may be inclined and determined to the *same* branches of *prudential* or *moral* conduct by *different* motives; and yet *each* particular motive may have its full weight, *i. e.* all that the *peculiar* nature and importance of it deserve, or that it can in *reason* claim. For this is only supposing, that the duty of reasonable creatures may be represented in *various* lights, and that there are more arguments than *one* to enforce the practice of it. And one would think it should as little bear a dispute, that an action, which more abstractedly consider'd is always right in itself, may likewise be an act of *obedience*, or a point of *interest*; or, in other words, that *reason*, and *authority*, and *private advantage* may all concur, and become *joint obligations*. But though this might  
be

be fairly taken for granted, I shall give the argument a more thorough discussion, for the sake of inquisitive or scrupulous minds, who may be desirous to have a question of such great importance, as decides what is the *true principle* of virtue, impartially stated, and cleared of all difficulties.

S E R M.

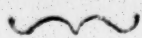
II.

FIRST then, If the practice of virtue for its intrinsic excellence, and a regard to the Divine authority, are not *consistent* principles, it must be upon one or other of these three accounts,--- either that *virtue* is contrary to the *will* of God --- or that God has no right to *command* what is *fit* and *good in itself*---or else, that though he may enjoin what is good in itself, and though it may be proper that his creatures should love and approve of every thing that is, in its own nature, amiable and useful; yet he is resolved from mere arbitrary pleasure, and as an instance of despotic sovereignty, that no regard shall be paid to the *reasonableness* and *equity* of his laws, but only to the *authority* that has imposed the observation of them. But all these wild suppositions, which make virtue oppose piety, and piety clash with



SERM. virtue, must of necessity end in the destruction of *both*.

II.



IF *virtue* be repugnant to the *will* of God, of that gracious, wise, and infinite mind, who gave being, life, and reason, to the several parts of the universe, no man of the least reflection can appear in the defence of it; because it must not *only* be unsuitable to the *dependencies* and *obligations* of creatures, but directly contrary to the *established laws* and *course* of Nature, in which the *will* of the Almighty Author of Nature is most clearly and strongly express'd. But as the entire reverse of this is the truth, and virtue appears to be immutably founded on the *Nature* and *relations* of things, and to be agreeable to the universal idea of *moral order* and *rectitude*; it is demonstratively proved, and with equal force of evidence, to be both a *dictate* of *reason*, and an *eternal law* of the *Deity*.

AGAIN, If God has no right to *enjoin* what is *fit in itself*, or to require, that those rules of moral virtue, which ought to be admired and carefully observed for their own *natural excellence* and *goodness*, should be obeyed likewise as *his laws*; about  
I what

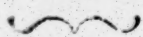
what can his *authority* be employed?---- Not surely in commanding things *unreasonable* and *evil*; because this supposes, that 'tis the end of his *Government* to corrupt and deface the beauty of his *Creation*--- Nor can it be employ'd wholly about matters of *indifference*: For this debases it into an *insignificant* and *useless* sovereignty.--- And shall we dare to say, that the Maker of the World has *no authority* at all; that Mankind are his *creatures*, but not his *subjects*; or if they are his *subjects*, that they owe no deference to his *authority*; that those are the *best* men who are *least* influenced by it; and that 'tis a *mean* and *low* motive to action, and not consistent with a *pure* and *generous* virtue?

THESE are all most unjust and extravagant suppositions.---And should we assert, that the Supreme Being is not desirous that Mankind should conform to the rules of righteousness and goodness from principles of *reason*, but from mere *awe* and *dread* of his *dominion*, this would be equally absurd; because 'tis self-evident, that a wise and just Governour cannot be fond of the *abject* and *implicit* submission of *slaves*; but only of



S E R M.

II.



such an homage as springs from *thought* and inward *veneration*; only of the *willing* and *cheerful* obedience of *free* and *generous* minds: An obedience, that demonstrates at the same time a sincere *reverence* of his *authority*, and *rectitude* and *ingenuity* of temper. This the light of nature, and all our best reasonings concerning the perfections and Providence of God, plainly teach us. And in the accounts we have of reveal'd religion, the Eternal fountain of wisdom has condescended to submit his *methods* and *rules* of moral government to the *judgment* and *reflections* of Men; and appeals, to their own *understandings*, for the *fitness* and *equity* of his immutable laws of Nature and Providence: As if the service that was offered him, from an *approbation* and full *consent* of the mind, was the main *support* and *prop* of his dominion over *Intelligent* Beings; and both infinitely more valuable in itself, and just to his transcendent glory and majesty, than the *superstitious* and *servile* dread of a boundless and arbitrary power.

THIS therefore is the conclusion from the whole: That if we will still maintain, that the love of virtue *for itself*, and a regard



gard to it as it is *the law* of the Almighty, SERM.  
are not absolutely *consistent* principles, we II.  
are reduced to the unhappy necessity of fix-  
ing in one or the other of these two gross  
absurdities; either that virtue is *rebellion*  
against the *authority* of heaven, or that the  
great God of heaven is a *Tyrant*.

IN like manner the desire and pursuit of  
happiness, of *solid, substantial, and su-*  
*preme* happiness, must perfectly agree with  
*both these*; with the love of virtue, on ac-  
count of its natural beauty and excellence;  
and with a serious and high regard to the  
power and Providence of God; or else  
these strange consequences will unavoidably  
follow ---- That *virtue* is not *consistent* with  
the *felicity* of reasonable Beings, nor with  
the *dignity* and *honour* of Human nature,  
from which its *highest happiness* is insepara-  
ble; and, consequently, that it is an *un-*  
*natural* fiction, which has no solid founda-  
tion in the *truth* of things. So that by this  
unfair and injurious representation of its  
genuine nature and qualities, all the boun-  
daries of *right* and *wrong* are at once  
thrown down, and the distinction of *good*  
and *evil* is totally confounded --- Or else

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it will follow from the other branch of the pretended *opposition* and *inconsistency*, that the *authority* of the glorious and universal Creator is then most *honoured*, when his creatures are *least concerned* about their own *chief good*; which every one must see is scarce possible, unless he *originally design'd* and *determin'd* their misery, and fix'd it as *the end* of their being: And thus the *wisdom* of the Eternal mind is diminished and obscured, and his *justice* and *mercy* are stained with cruelty. So that by the *last* of these consequences, the whole of *natural religion* is subverted; and by the *first*, all the obligations of *morality* are destroy'd, whether they are supposed to arise from the *particular constitution* of Human nature, or from a more *general* source, the *abstract reason* and *fitness* of things. But, in reality, as both morality and natural religion are built on an *immutable ground of truth*, the shocking consequences which have been mentioned, resulting directly from the *contrary* scheme, are an unanswerable proof that that which I at first proposed, and have endeavoured to demonstrate, is the *right* one; and that the love of virtue for itself, a  
regard

*Of the true principle of virtue.*

41

regard to the authority of God, and the desire and pursuit of private happiness, are intirely *correspondent* and *harmonious* principles, which may *all* subsist together.

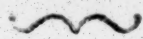
S E R M.  
II.  
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I proceed now one step farther to the SECOND thing proposed, which was to shew, that they are all three *just* and *rational* principles of virtue: From whence it will clearly appear, that though *one* of them may be too closely and intensely pursued, to the neglect of the other two, which deserve some share of our attention, and ought to be allowed their proper influence; yet, in the nature of the principles themselves, they can never be *inconsistent* with each other. *Truth* and *falsehood*, *right* and *wrong*, will of course clash and be opposite in their effects, as they are contrary in their natures; but reason and reason cannot *interfere*: And all principles of conduct, which are *immutably right*, must necessarily *suit*, and always *unite*, together.

Now that the love of virtue is a *rational* principle must be as certain as that virtue is in itself *amiable*, and a *real good*; and if it will be *eternally amiable*, and the source of
most

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most substantial pleasure and satisfaction, the esteem, and love, and practice of it, for its own sake, must be an *immutably* right principle of action----Again, a regard to the authority of God must also be highly *reasonable*, if he be the *Creator* of the World on whom all Beings absolutely depend, and governs with *wisdom*, *equity*, and *goodness*: And if the relations of *creatures*, *dependents*, and *beneficiaries*, be *fixed* and *unalterable*; and the attributes of *wisdom*, *justice*, and *mercy* be *essential* to the Deity; this, likewise, must be an *unchangeable* principle of right. Besides, *the whole constitution of things*, from which the obligations of *virtue* result, was contrived by his unerring skill, and established by his omnipotent power; so that 'tis engraven in most legible characters on the face of *Nature*----that *virtue* is the *law* of God. And therefore if we consider it only as *abstract reason*, but not at all as the *sacred will* of this great Being, our apprehensions are narrow and *partial*, and not carried to that due *extent* and *latitude* as the light of Nature itself directs.--Finally, a regard to our supreme happiness is evidently

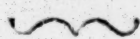
vid.

reasonable, because it may be presumed with the strongest probability from the wisdom and goodness of the first Cause of all things, that this was his *principal design* in our formation.---'Tis a *necessary duty*, an *immutable act of reason*, because 'tis in pursuance of an eternal dictate, an uncontrollable instinct of *Nature*. And let the foundation of *benevolence* be what it will, either an *innate benevolent affection* (which is balanced by *self-love*, a *natural principle* of at least *equal strength*) or *fitness and propriety* of conduct in certain *characters and relations*; I say, let the foundation of *benevolence* be what it will, it must surely be as *reasonable* for me to study, and endeavour to promote, *my own happiness*, as that of any *other single Being* in the universe. So that the *desire and pursuit* of an adequate and suitable good for *myself* stands, unquestionably, upon as solid a foundation of *right and duty*, as *benevolence* to a *fellow-creature*.

SHOULD it be objected, that though this be allow'd, yet if *my happiness* proves to be contrary to the *general good*, it ought, then, upon all the principles of virtue to be given up, and sacrificed to a more important

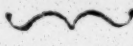
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tant and valuable end: I answer, that this is an *absurd* way of making *suppositions*; because 'tis *imagining* an instance that is *impossible*, to destroy the force of an argument built on *fact*, and certain appearances in *Nature*. For though my present ease and pleasure, or views of advantage, *may be*, yet my happiness upon the whole *cannot be*, inconsistent with the good of the *universe*, or with the happiness of *any other single Being* upon the whole. Nor is it *fit in itself*, that any thing of this kind should ever come to pass, because when this is the case, it may be said of every such Being, that by the *original frame* of things, and consequently by the *will* of the *Creator*, he is under a fatal and invincible necessity of being *miserable*. Nay, he is obliged to perform a most noble and heroic act of *generosity*, and yet the consequence of this is supposed to be *miserery upon the whole*; i. e. in other words, a sublime and superior virtue has the hard lot to be *punished*, instead of being eminently and signally *rewarded*, as, in the judgment of all sober and impartial Persons, it must highly deserve to be.

But finally, which compleats my pre-

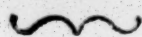
present consideration of this subject, the SERM.
three principles, on which I have been dis- II.
coursing, are not only *consistent* and *rational*, 

but *inseparably connected*.---- The appro-
bation of *virtue in any instance*, because
it is fit in itself, must necessarily infer
a regard to *every thing* that is fit in it-
self. Thus, for example, justice to *one*
infers, in reason, the practice of justice to
all other Beings; gratitude to *Men* the exer-
cise of gratitude to the *eternal God*; reve-
rence and due submission to *any* rightful au-
thority a reverent due submission to *all*
rightful authority; and consequently to the
authority of *God* which is founded on the
first law of reason, and the source and
model of all *inferior* authority.

AGAIN, the love of virtue, for itself,
cannot be *separated* from a regard to our
own happiness.----For what do we mean
by the *love of virtue for itself*? Is nothing
more intended, than that we esteem and ad-
mire it for an *abstract beauty* --- distinct
from its *use*? This may seem to some to be
a high strain in *speculation*; but I fear the
generality will scarcely think it *intelligible*,
or at least not *practicable*: For it will rea-
dily

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dily be asked---Is not that, in *morals*, most *beautiful*, which is most *useful*? Or, if the duties of religion have a direct and certain tendency to promote *happiness*, private and publick, present and future, temporary and eternal; does not *this* recommend them most justly and strongly to our *esteem*? Is it not their most *substantial* excellence? Do they not on *this account* deserve our *love*, more than for any *mere beauties* that may strike and warm the *imagination*, and entertain and delight Persons of *elevated* and *refined* contemplations? And is it possible then, that a regard to the *happiness* that springs from virtue can be *separated* from the just and rational *love* of virtue? That it is a very *desireable good*, and attended with *beneficial* consequences, there are but few that dispute; and if it can likewise be conceived and proved to be *amiable*, apart from its being *useful*, then it must be allowed, that *both* these considerations are a solid ground for the *love* and *practice* of it. And if we should be thought too partial, did we love virtue only as a *good*, and not as it is in itself *beautiful*; it must surely be an equal instance of partiality to regard it

Of the true principle of virtue.

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it only as *a fine picture*, but not as the *source* of *happiness*.

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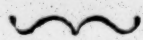
II.



LET US now consider the matter in another light, and fix the *authority* of God as the *first principle* in our reasoning, and then see, whether the *general conclusion* will not be the same as before. And here the whole will depend upon a just notion of the thing itself. If we mean by *authority* nothing more than supreme dominion, and absolute power, exercised at *random*, and not directed by a *moral* principle; 'tis certain, that no inferences can be made from it, that are either favourable to *virtue*, or the *happiness* of the Creation. But this is confounding ideas that are totally *distinct*: For a Being may have *power* to do what he *pleases*, but he can have no *authority* to do any thing but what is *right*. We cannot therefore entertain an honourable opinion of the Divine government, unless we suppose it to be founded in *justice*, and exercised with *grace* and *clemency*. But how can *equity* and *goodness* be the foundation and rule of any government, if its laws are not *just* and *reasonable*? And if they are *wise* and *good* in themselves, they must be approved

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proved of and highly valued on the very *same* principles, on which we reverence the *power* that enacted them. If, on the other hand, they are *tyrannical* and *hurtful* injunctions, we may *dread*, and perhaps think it our interest to *flatter*, a power to which we are unhappily subject, and which we are too weak to oppose; but it cannot engage us in pleasing reflections, nor inspire sentiments of *real respect* and *honour*. So that a becoming regard to the majesty and authority of heaven, and a sincere love and esteem of its laws from a sense of their own excellence, and the valuable purposes they are adapted to serve, will always be, in the nature of things, *inseparable*.

LET me add to this, that if the laws of God are calculated for the *good* of his rational creatures, and, of consequence, if the whole administration and conduct of his *moral* government has a view to their *happiness*, so far as is consistent with the original constitution and faculties of their respective natures; it then certainly follows, that a pursuit of their own highest and most lasting happiness is as *intimately*, and *invariably*, connected with the pay-
ing

ing due honours to his supreme authority, as the love of virtue for itself has already been shewn to be. The more intent and inflexible they are in prosecuting this end, and the greater degrees of *true happiness* they attain to, the more completely will they execute their part in the general scheme of *Providence*, and display both its *wisdom* and *goodness* in a so much more *illustrious* and *admirable* light.

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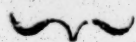


To conclude this head, If we have a *due concern* for our own happiness, and withal a *just idea* of happiness, we shall most surely seek it in the paths of *virtue*, and in the *esteem* and *favour* of the Almighty Governour of the universe. And thus it appears, that these *three* principles *coincide*, and form, in a manner, but *one* principle; having the *same foundation* of *reason*, being *uniform* in their *operation*, and *conspiring* to one common end.

MEN fond of *Theories* may indulge their fancies, frame a *moral Romance*, and feign a World of *wonders*; but *true morality* is built on the *real state* of things, adapted to the *condition* and *faculties* of Mankind, and does not set *one* part of Nature at var-

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riance with another. The Christian religion, therefore, has advanced no *impracticable* schemes, but considers the World *as it is*. Virtue, indeed, is represented as *amiable*, but then it is supported by the *authority* of God, and encouraging promises of a future *reward*; and these thoroughly consistent and rational motives are left to communicate their *united* influence, --- left to *strengthen* and *enforce* each other. And in this the *doctrine*, and the *example*, of our blessed Saviour exactly correspond. For though we read of the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ, of his amazing condescension, his Godlike benevolence and compassion, and the delight he took *in doing good*; yet we are told expressly, that it was his *meat* to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work; and that he endured the cross, despising the shame --- for the joy that was set before him.

John iv.

34.

Hebr.

xii. 2.

UPON the whole, then, we may safely rest in these *conclusions*: That to obey *only* from the *dread* of authority, or the hope of a *reward*, without an inward esteem and love of virtue, is *mean* and *mercenary*.

On

Of the true principle of virtue.

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On the other hand, to practise virtue *only* for its *abstract natural fitness* and *beauty*, without having any regard to the *Creator* and *Governour* of Mankind, is an inexcusable defect in our *duty* to the *first* and *greatest* of Beings. --- Or else take the sum of the argument thus: That he who acts only from a regard to virtue for itself in the manner above explained, may be stiled, in the common narrow acceptation of the term, a *moral*, but is not a *religious* Man; he that is influenced only by the *authority* of God, and has no sense of the rectitude of actions, may be stiled, in a like contracted and inadequate sense, a *religious*, but he is not a truly *moral* Man; but he who acts *jointly* from principles of *reason*, from motives of *piety*, and from a view to *his own highest interest*, is *moral*, *wise*, and *religious*. --- And this, I can make no scruple to declare, is, in my opinion, by far the most *worthy* and *finished* character.

S E R M.

II.





S E R M O N III.



Of the nature, Divine original, and
authority of Conscience.

ACTS xxiii. 1.

-----*Men and brethren, I have
lived in all good Conscience before
God, until this day.*

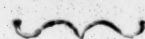
 **T**HE eternal Source of Being, having formed a perfect plan and model of the universe in his infinite all-comprehending mind, has executed every part of his vast design with a wonderful *discer-*

S E R M.
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III.



*sity*, and yet a general *uniformity*: The effects of his power, though *various*, are all determined and regulated in that way which is most agreeable to the respective natures, and *jointly* conspire to the universal *beauty* and *use*. This scheme, which infinite wisdom at first contrived, and omnipotent Creation established, Providence still continues, and will pursue to its final completion.

EVERY species of Beings appears to have been ordained to some determinate *end*; and the necessary *means*, for obtaining this end, are provided and settled in their very constitution. Thus we see, in the *inanimate material* World, what are called *laws of Nature*; or a fixed and certain course of effects *necessarily* produced, under the direction and impressions of the Divine power. And from these laws result the *harmony* and *order* of the material system, *splendor*, *propriety*, *elegance*, and innumerable *salutary* and *beneficial influences*, which illustriously display the immense skill, and goodness, and glory of the *Creator*, and contribute *necessarily* to the subsistence, comfort, and happiness, of *Sensitive* and *Intelligent* creatures.

creatures. If we rise higher to *Animals*, we find them excited by *sense* and *instinct* to self-preservation, the care of their young, and the several different uses, for which each distinct species was intended. --- But when we come to *Rational Beings*, the *necessary* determination ceases. The affections and appetites are no longer, in themselves, *blind* and *uncontroulable*. The law of *their* nature is a MORAL LAW. And to secure the observation of this law, in which the true perfection and felicity of each individual, and the common good of the whole invariably consist, the great Author of their superiour frame hath endued them with *a faculty*, that, in the most essential and considerable branches, easily discerns, and strongly dictates, *right* and *wrong*, and the difference of *good* and *evil*; and thus appears to have been designed to be *a light* in their minds, an intimate and perpetual *monitor*; and by its *approving*, and *condemning*, which causes either serenity and self-enjoyment, or shame, remorse, and terror, it appears likewise to be constituted, in a great degree, the *natural rewarder* of *virtue*, and *punisher* of *vice*.

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THIS *faculty*, this inward *light*, and *judge*, is distinguish'd and known by the name of *Conscience*, whose decisions, with respect to the grand points of moral duty, are generally *exact* and *impartial*; and its voice, when it is truly *natural* Conscience, (*i. e.* a *right-judging* and *uncorrupted* Conscience) is the *just*, but *authoritative*, voice of GOD.----In discoursing farther on this subject, I shall,

FIRST, Inquire, more particularly, what we are to understand by the principle stiled *Conscience*; what foundation it has in *Nature*; what is its *office*, its real *authority*, and *use*.

SECONDLY, What we must understand by a *good Conscience*.

THIRDLY, (Which is an inquiry that the case of *St. Paul*, who speaks in the text, plainly directs to) I shall examine, how far an *erroneous* Conscience can deserve the character of being a *good* Conscience; and especially, where it excites men to *immoral* practices, and approves of flagrant *injustice* and *barbarity* as grateful services to the God of *truth* and *mercy*.---These are all questions, upon which the integrity of our minds,



minds, and the rectitude of our manners, essentially depend. They relate to the *immediate rule* of life and conduct. And, therefore, the determining either of them wrong must draw after it very hurtful and pernicious consequences.

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THE FIRST thing proposed was to inquire, more particularly, what we are to understand by the principle stiled *Conscience*; what foundation it has in *Nature*, what is its *office*, its real *authority*, and *use*.---*Conscience* is that principle in man, which judges of the *morality* of actions; that shews us the course we are to *pursue*, and the errors we are to avoid; that points out to us the laws of *Nature*, the laws of *God*, the distinction of *good* and *evil*, and the most important and obvious lines of our duty in *all* circumstances; that *reflects* likewise, and *passes sentence* upon our conduct, and the principles and motives by which we are influenced; *checks*, *admonishes*, and *upbraids*, when we do amiss, but *justifies* and *applauds*, when we act conformably to the standard of right, and the obligations of virtue and rational piety. It is the same principle that is stiled in scripture the *Heart*,

If

SERM.

III.

John iii.

21.

Rom. viii.

16.

Chap. vii.

23.

Chap. ii.

85.

*If our Heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God; the Spirit, as when it is said, that the Spirit of God beareth witness with our Spirit, i.e. with our Conscience and inward reflection, that we are the children of God: It is styled likewise the law of the Mind, and the law written in the Heart. And the propriety of all these names, by which Conscience is described, must be evident upon a little serious thought; nay, each of them may justly be supposed to have a peculiar sense and emphasis. When it is called the Heart, this may denote to us, that it is an in-wrought, an essential, and vital principle in our intellectual and moral frame. When it is denominated Spirit, and the law of the Mind, this may represent to us, that all the suggestions, admonitions, and remonstrances of natural Conscience have their foundation in, and result from, our rational powers; it being nothing else but our inward discernment, judgment, and reflection, applied and confined to moral conduct. Nor is it less easy to see, why it is described as the law written in the Heart; because it expresses our duty, in the general and more momentous branches*

branches of it, so *clearly*, without the need of deep inquiries, or abstract laborious reasonings, as if the law of God was exhibited to our view, engraven in *distinct* and *legible* characters.

THIS (perhaps the *Libertine* will say) is grave and solemn talk, that suits with the prepossessions and opinions of the times. But how is it proved, that Conscience is so *sacred*, so *Divine*, a principle? How does it appear, that it is an *original* principle in human nature, and not an *acquired* habit; the seeds of which were first sown in our *education*, and which has been established by *custom* and *prejudice*? If we examine it, what is *Conscience*, in many instances, but a more venerable name for extravagant *fancy* and *presumption*? --- To the *principal* question I shall presently reply. In the mean time give me leave to observe, that the whole of what looks like *argument* is contained in the latter part of the objection, and stands thus: "Weak and groundless  
" *scruples*, and the dictates of *superstition*,  
" oftentimes usurp the authority of Consci-  
" ence, and therefore Conscience itself is  
" a mere *chimera*." But here *common*  
*sense*



SERM. *sense* must immediately interpose, and ask,  
 III. how this consequence can be fairly deduced  
 ~~~~~ from the premises? Because *wrong* principles are often entertained and built upon, will this conclude, that there are, in Nature, no *right* principles? Because *error* frequently prevails, is there no *truth*? Because *fallacy* and *art* pass for solid reasoning, is there no such thing as *right reason*? Or, because there are cases, in which men act upon *hasty* conclusions, and allow to these the influence that is only due to *deliberate* and *just* reflection, is there no use at all in *sober* and *calm* reflection? All this must be admitted, and there is neither *reason*, nor *truth*, nor a *difference* in things, if it follows, *merely* because the name of *Conscience* is abused, that there is, really, no *moral principle* in Man, nor any *natural sense* of good and evil. But to come directly to the point.

THAT there is an *intrinsic* and *essential* difference in actions and characters, is self-evident. *Just* and *unjust*, *benevolence* and *cruelty*, cannot possibly convey the same *ideas*, nor appear in the same *light*, nor have the same *worth*, in a *moral* estimate.

mate, the one as the other. And as these dispositions and characters are quite *opposite* in their nature, and in their tendency and influence; it is impossible that they should *both* appear, to any *rational* and *moral* eye, lovely and eligible. But if the one be *beautiful*, its contrary must be *foul* and *monstrous*; if the one be *amiable*, the other must be *horrid* and *detestable*. But now which of these is the *lovely*, and which the *disagreeable*, character? Where lies the moral *beauty*; and where the *turpitude* and *deformity*? --- Ask the *Man* of the *meanest* capacity, and he immediately distinguishes---Ask the *Philosopher*, he expresses the same general sense----Ask even the *superstitious*, and the *vicious*, and in all cases, wherein their superstitions and vices are not particularly interested, *their* sentiments exactly correspond----Nay inquire of men of all *degrees*, and of all *nations*, and *complexions*, and you will find them to agree in ascribing the true *dignity*, *excellence*, and *beauty* to justice, goodness, and mercy; and affixing to the contrary vices, ideas of *reproach* and *horror*. And can any thing be a more probable presumption

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tion upon such clear and strong grounds; than this---That *Conscience* is *original* to the Human constitution? Neither *custom* nor *superstition* have ever had such a universal effect. The wise have judged *rightly* of these, and have secretly *derided* establish'd follies, in all ages. But persons of the finest genius, and whose names are the most eminent in all history for their extraordinary abilities and improvements, have thought most *sublimely* of *moral virtue*; and, in proportion to their superior endowments, and the extent of their knowledge, have treated it with a more distinguish'd *veneration* and *honour*.

I MAY add to this, that if *Conscience* be not a *natural* principle, it seems impossible for us to prove, that there are any *natural* principles, or any *natural* affections, in Human nature. For what way have we to prove that a principle is *natural* but by shewing, that it results directly from our *frame* (which is most evidently the case of *Conscience*, of inward *moral judgment*) and that we feel it working strongly in *ourselves*, and discern the same in *others* of *all* stations and characters? What other way have we

to

Of Conscience.

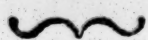
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to prove, that *benevolence*, that *compassion*, or even SELF-LOVE, are natural? SERM.
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IF it be said, that *many* act in direct opposition to what *Conscience* is thought so strongly and universally to intimate; I answer, that there are *many* likewise, who act in a manner as plainly repugnant to what true *self-love* and *self-preservation* dictate.

IF it be said farther, that *multitudes* have suppressed, and in a manner extinguished, natural Conscience --- There are also *multitudes* who have suppress'd, and in a manner extinguish'd, the tender motions of a pitiful and sympathising heart; and have lost the *natural* and *proper* esteem and love of themselves. For *self-love* is not merely a propension to *present* pleasure, and an aversion to *present* pain; because this very principle has led men, when nothing else could determine their resolution, to forego *present* pleasure, and submit to *present* pain, for the sake of future good, even in this life. Consider'd therefore, as a *regular natural* principle that deserves to be cherished, it can only prompt to the pursuit of *true happiness*, and the avoiding *real* and *substantial* misery. But, in this view of it,
'tis

SERM. 'tis undeniable, that it is too *generally* ex-
 III. tinguish'd.



THIS, it may be pretended, is owing to the want of *attention*. --- In like manner, the little authority and influence of Conscience is always owing to the *same* cause. And these two remarks, added to what has been already suggested, are sufficient to persuade us, that it is a *natural* and *universal* faculty: (1st,) That in the worst and most distemper'd minds, when passion is fatiated and subsides, and particular occurrences occasion a gravity of temper, and force reflection, *Conscience* usually revives, whatever *violence* may been offer'd to it. And, (2^{dly},) That the voice of Conscience is scarce ever *unheard* with respect to the *general* obligations of religion and morality, and in the *flagrant* and *notorious* distinctions of good and evil; but only in *particular cases*, which are not so easily seen to be included in *general rules*, as the solid foundation of *the rules themselves* is immediately and distinctly perceived. Besides, Mens seeming indolence and unconcernedness in vicious courses may be owing rather to *shifts* and *excuses*, which they have

have contrived to remove a *present terror*, than to an entire *disowning* the authority of *Conscience*. Nay, if they *professed* to *believe firmly* that *Conscience* is only a *fiction*, a dream of the frightened *Enthusiast*, or a device of the subtil *Politician*, to which nothing but credulity, and custom, and the influence of power, have given a *real character*; we could have no reason to convince us that this *profession* was *sincere*, unless we knew what they FELT: Because their *inward sense* of things may differ very much from the *outward appearance* which they think it proper to assume, as a mark of *distinction*, though it be but in *infamy*, or from imaginary notions of *politeness*, or as a plausible excuse for their *immoralities*; but chiefly, because those who entirely renounce and discard *Conscience* can acknowledge no obligation to TRUTH. Why then should they be credited against the common experience of Mankind, and what it is highly probable, is their own *secret* experience?---But after all, what does their *belief* amount to in point of *argument*? If a few singular and extravagant Infidels are extremely *confident* that a thing

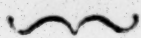
S E R M. does *not exist*, is that a proof, in *reason*,
 III. that it does not? Or is their being *confident*
 ~~~~~ that it is not a *natural* principle --- *evidence*  
 that it is not a natural principle? If so, it  
 must be true, that no man can believe a no-  
 torious and palpable absurdity; though this  
 is contradicted by our daily observation. ---  
*Moral* principles however certain their foun-  
 dation be in *Nature*, do not operate *neces-*  
*sarily*, like those which are merely *Animal*.  
 And though the appetites of *hunger* and  
*thirst* will be *felt*; *Conscience*, though a  
 principle inherent in the mind, may be for  
 a long time stifled, for want of *reflection*,  
 which is, in most cases, entirely *volun-*  
*tary*.

AND since it appears, upon the whole,  
 from our *reasonings*, *sensations*, and *expe-*  
*rience*, the only principles and mediums  
 of knowledge besides what are of an *extra-*  
*ordinary* kind, that Conscience is a part of  
 the primitive *moral constitution* of Human  
*nature*; from hence may fairly be deduced  
 its *supremacy*, and office of *jurisdiction*, and  
*government*. If there be such a principle  
 existing at *all* by the law of our creation,  
 and, consequently, by Divine ordination  
 and

and appointment, it must be its place to *dictate* and *command*. For nothing is more plain, from the permanent and unchangeable nature of things, than these two propositions are; (1st) That *Passion* cannot rightly *command*, but may be *subject*: And on the contrary, that *moral judgment* and *reflection* cannot, with any face of propriety or order, be *subject*; but wherever it resides clear and unclouded, it may, and must, *command*. *Sense* and *passion* are not fit to *command*, because they are blind, and incapable of directing and regulating *themselves*, even in such a manner as is necessary for their more *perfect gratification*; and much more of guiding and steering *other* principles: But sense and passion want to be *govern'd*, to prevent scandalous and hurtful excesses; and this government can only be the office of the superior principle stiled *Conscience*. On the other hand, if *Conscience* be enslaved to appetite, it becomes entirely *useless*, and can answer no one purpose in Human nature. To assert, that wild and lawless passions have the *right of authority*, and that all our *rational* and *moral* faculties were intended to minister to their ex-

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orbitant and tyrannical sway, represents this excellent nature in such a vile and hideous form, as creates detestation. It describes it as in a state of confusion and utter *anarchy*; and nothing that is *generous*, *praise-worthy*, and *amiable*, can subsist in it. But when Conscience *presides* as the *interpreter* of the law of eternal reason, and of the law of God, and tumultuous passions are still'd and calm'd by its *efficacious* voice; there is then a glorious and delightful *harmony* between the several *powers* and *principles* in our nature: each keeps its *rank*, and is allowed all its proper *indulgences*; and the necessary *subordinations* for the beauty and good of the *whole* are strictly and duly maintain'd. In consequence of which, Man appears in a station of high dignity, --- as a *wise*, *noble*, and *God-like* creature. This may suffice with respect to the *right idea*, the foundation in *Nature*, the *office*, *authority*, and *use* of Conscience in general.

I NOW proceed to the SECOND inquiry, *viz.* what we are to understand by a *good Conscience*. And this will be soon apprehended, when we have explained the  
mean-



meaning of the phrase itself. When *goodness* is attributed to Conscience, it may either signify the *clearness*, *uprightness*, and *force* of its determinations and judgments, or the *pleasure* that springs from it; *i. e.* in other words, --- *rectitude* of Conscience, or --- *peace* of Conscience.

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THAT the Conscience may be *good* in the first of these senses, it is absolutely necessary that it be *rightly informed*; that it distinguish *truly*, and represent good and evil *impartially*. For if it gives *false* accounts of virtue and vice, of the immutable law of Nature, and rule of Human actions, it ceases to be the voice of God; its authority is so far *imaginary* only; and its warnings and rebukes, its comforts and terrors, are at least *ineffectual* to answer the wise purpose for which it was originally ordained, if not extremely *dangerous*.

AGAIN, If the Conscience be *good* in respect of its influence, and preserving its natural commanding power, its dictates will be readily and universally obey'd.--- It will *regulate* all the *subordinate* principles and affections, and be itself *controuled* by none of them.--- It will *subdue*

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corrupt prejudice, and not be *darken'd* by it. --- It will be *reverenced* and *submitted to*, and not *dethroned*, by irregular passions. Neither can a *blind*, nor an *impotent*, Conscience be good *in its own nature*, nor good in its *effects*. The result of the former can be nothing better than an *absurd* and *irrational* peace of mind, which is supported entirely by *ignorance* and *delusion*. And though there may be a *lethargic stupidity*, and the stillness and quietness of *death*; it is utterly impossible that there should be any *moral self-enjoyment*, which is the most exalted happiness of Intelligent Beings, while Conscience is insulted and depressed.

ONCE more; That alone can be justly denominated a *good* Conscience, which is humble, inquiring, and attentive; shock'd at the deformity of vice, struck with the charms of virtue; tender, cautious, and fearful of offending; and not conniving at any doubtful and suspicious measures of conduct. For it is a necessary point in religion and good morals, when the mind is in *suspence* about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of particular actions, always to take

Of Conscience.

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Take that side on which we are secure of maintaining our *innocence*, and strict *fidelity* to God, our rightful supreme Governor. And whoever chuses to do what he is inclined to *believe* is unlawful and evil, or what he barely *suspects* to be unlawful and evil; must have lost in a great degree (if he does it without any remorse) the *natural sense* of virtue and piety: Or (if he really feels remorse) he must act in direct opposition to *it*. I shall only add, that such a wilful opposition to the superior moral principle, in *lesser* instances, will lead to the same in *greater*, and, if it be continued, must of necessity terminate, at length, in what the New Testament stiles, by a very apt and elegant *metaphor*, a *seared Conscience*, or a Conscience quite *callous* and *insensible*; which is not alarmed or disturbed by the *wilest* and most *odious* crimes; but suffers the sinner to go on, without *check* or *controul*, thro' all the degrees of licentiousness, to which an ungovern'd temper and ill habits, may prompt and incline him. And when any are sunk down into this complete state of degeneracy, they can scarce be consider'd,

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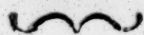
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1 Tim. i.

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any longer, as a part of the MORAL world ; they are subject indeed to all the *guilt* of which moral agents are capable, because of their *voluntary*, tho' unnatural, abuse of their powers ; but have forfeited all the *privileges* of such ---- And, which is still worse, they have degraded the *only* faculty, by means of which they can ever *revive*, and be *raised again* to their peculiar prerogative and honour. To prevent, therefore, this extreme corruption and infamy, this most dreadful of all evils, maintain an habitual and generous sense of the *dignity* of thy nature ; disdain to be enslaved to appetite, the *grosser* and *baser* part of it ; follow the guidance of the *superior* refined and noble principle, that was intended to direct and govern ; carefully attend to the voice of *Conscience*, and treat it evermore with respect and veneration. All which is summarily comprehended in the excellent advice of the Prophet, --- *to shew thyself a MAN* ; and in that wise maxim of the Philosopher, much to the same purpose --- REVERENCE *thyself*.

Hie. xlvii. 8

S E R -



S E R M O N I V .

*****!*****!*****!*****!

'The plea of an erroneous Conscience distinctly consider'd and argued.

A C T S xxiii. 1.

---- *Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God, until this day.*

IN my last discourse, I treated largely of the *nature*, the *Divine original*, the *office*, and sacred authority, of Conscience in general ; and of the *essential characters*, and *discriminating properties*, of a *good Conscience*. The only inquiry that remains to be made (accord-

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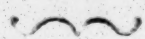
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ing to the method of handling this subject, which I at first proposed) is,



IN the THIRD place, How far an *erroneous* Conscience can deserve to be term'd a *good* Conscience; and, especially, when it excites men to *immoral* practices, and approves of *injustice* and *barbarity* as grateful services to the God of *truth* and *mercy*. --- This the case of St. *Paul*, and what he has asserted in the text, directly lead us to consider; and the importance of the thing itself renders it highly worthy of a particular discussion; since it must, in a great measure, determine *Personal* virtue, and its just and rational claim to a reward. Virtue in *action*, and *real character*, is always to be estimated from the disposition and conduct, or, in general, from the integrity, of the mind. And, therefore, in order to form a right idea of it, the *affections* and *biasses* of the mind, so far as they are *voluntarily* indulged and cherished, the degree of *application* which it has used in order to understand what is the true rule of life, together with the *good* or *bad* principles from whence its judgments and determinations flow, must

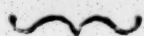
be fairly and impartially weigh'd. And, of consequence, the *causes* of an *erroneous* Conscience, their *innocence* or *malignity*, and the *strength* of their *influence*, must go a great way towards denominating particular characters to be either pious and upright, or corrupt and vicious. I now proceed to solve the inquiry proposed, and shall begin with observing in general,

IN the FIRST place, that no *error* can *totally* excuse from guilt, but what is *invincible*. This is the basis of all our reasonings upon the subject, and therefore it is necessary that it be clearly and distinctly stated. And that what is asserted in this proposition is agreeable to our *wisest* apprehensions of God, and of the *intelligent* and *accountable* frame of Man, and to all the *equitable* principles and maxims of *Divine* and *Human* governments, will immediately appear upon settling rightly this single point --- What is meant by *invincible error*? It *strictly* signifies that error, which arises from a *natural incapacity* of knowing better; or from the want of *sufficient* and *adequate means* of knowledge. But in a *moral* construction an error may
be

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be said to be *invincible*, that is not naturally and absolutely unavoidable: *i. e.* in other words, it may be fairly presumed, that all such errors, as it is not *reasonable* to expect, taking in *every* circumstance, that a person should *avoid*; or which it was highly *probable* he would *fall into*, from his education, and the force of example, from the want of motives to examine, and helps to judge rightly, and several other disadvantages, which might be enumerated; it may, I say, be fairly presumed, that such errors as these will be admitted as a *good plea* before the righteous and merciful tribunal of God, and be no more a *bar* to the obtaining his favour, than if they sprang from an *incurable defect* in the intellectual faculty, or the want of *necessary light*. So when it is affirm'd, that none but *invincible* error will *totally* excuse us from guilt, the whole amounts to no more than this almost self-evident truth, --- That nothing will *entirely* excuse us, but what argues a thorough unperverted honesty, and good disposition; nothing, in short, that we *might* and *ought* to have prevented, and which

is

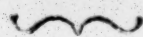
is owing to the *voluntary* neglect and S E R M.
abuse of our own powers. IV.

But if it be allowed, that *invincible* error removes all guilt, it may still be ask'd, how an erroneous Conscience can be described as a *good* Conscience? --- Can that be a good Conscience, which is *corrupt* in its most important *decisions*? which puts forth *false* lights whereby to delude and ensnare us? which, so far as it is erroneous, defeats the natural *intent* and *use* of Conscience? which as a guide is *unsafe* and *dangerous*, as a monitor *unfaithful*, as a judge *blind* and *prejudiced*; and by following which, we must of necessity relinquish and desert the paths of *virtue*? --- I answer, that it is undoubtedly *evil* in all these respects: But how? --- Why if its errors are, in the sense in which I have explain'd the term, *invincible*, only thus: As the *natural* decay or loss of reason is an *evil*, or as all the *accidental* infirmities and misfortunes, that attend Human nature, may be represented as *evils*. But, notwithstanding this, in the *moral* consideration of it, it may be denominated *good*, when its mistakes are of such a kind, and
spring

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spring from such a concurrence of unhappy circumstances, as are consistent with the strictest *Personal virtue*, and an uncorrupted integrity of *moral character*.

THE SECOND observation which I would make in answer to the question, how far an *erroneous Conscience* is an excuse for *immoralities*, is this; That exactly in the degree in which its error is *avoidable*, the *goodness* of the Conscience must be *diminished*. This is a most certain and obvious deduction from the foregoing head. For if *none* but invincible error will totally excuse from guilt, *all* error, that is not invincible, must necessarily include in it the idea of guilt: *i. e.* all such error, as it might *reasonably* be expected, taking in *every* circumstance, that we should not fall into; and every prejudice, which it might be expected with *equal reason*, that we should conquer and subdue. *Invincible* error is therefore admitted as a complete excuse, because it is *innocent*; and it is therefore *innocent*, because it is *involuntary*. On the contrary, all *voluntary* error must, on that very account, be *criminal* error. And if error be *criminal* only be-
cause

cause it is *voluntary*, it directly follows SERM.
 from hence, that the malignity of it must IV.
increase according to the *degree* in which 
 it is voluntary; or, which is the same, it
 must always *increase* in *proportion* as it
 was in our power to have avoided it, in
 our *several* stations, and with our *respec-*
tive abilities and advantages.

AGAIN, All *error* is voluntary, as the
causes of it are voluntary. Now of these
 there is a variety. As, in the (1st) place,
Imperfect and *superficial inquiry*, which is
 evidently unbecoming reasonable creatures;
 who ought, in all points of importance in
 which their highest interests are concern'd,
 to proceed with the utmost *caution*, and
 not to act with *rashness* and *presumption*.
 Or, (2dly) *Absolute indifference* and *inat-*
tention, which directly opposes the origi-
 nal and only design of our peculiar and
 more noble faculties; and must, therefore,
 be more blameable than incomplete and
 partial examination; because he that per-
 forms his duty in *some measure* is, compa-
 ratively speaking, a better man, than he
 who neglects it *altogether*. This, I appre-
 hend, as a *general* rule, cannot be disputed;
 though

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SERM. though the *circumstances* of cases may
 IV. make some exceptions. But (3dly) The
 causes of religious error may sometimes be
pride, prejudice, obstinacy, or sensual pas-
sions darkening and controuling the judg-
 ment; which, besides their having a na-
 tural tendency to produce the two former
 evils, must, upon this account also, be
 more criminal than either of them confi-
 der'd abstractedly, and in itself; as they
 not only argue the *want* of that *good* tem-
 per which may justly be required of all
 Mankind, but the strong *prevalency* of an
evil temper.

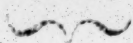
THIS therefore we may fix as our *rule*
 of judgment --- That the guilt of all vo-
 luntary error differs with the *causes* of it.
 If it be occasion'd by *partial* and *unfinish'd*
inquiries, in cases where greater exactness
 and care, and more extensive thought and
 reflection, may *fairly* be expected from
 us, all *due* allowances being made for our
 situation and circumstances, it is then
 undoubtedly *sinful*. If it arises from abso-
 lute *inattention*, and the making *no use*
at all of our rational capacities, its *ma-*
lignity is rather *heighten'd* and *aggravated*.

If *pride, prejudice, or obstinacy* are the SERM.
 causes of error, the guilt of it is still *more* IV.
increased. But the *highest* pitch of all is, 
 when *irregular* inclinations, and the *love*
 and *pursuit* of evil, give us an unnatural
 and fatal *biass* to the side of irreligion and
 immorality. It is therefore a great abuse
 of our own weakness and credulity, and
 a very preposterous method of arguing,
 to conclude, that we are entirely *justified*
 even in practices which the law of Nature
 forbids, *merely* because the inward sense
 and reflection of our minds does not *con-*
demn us. For if our moral discernment
 and sense of things be erroneous, what-
 ever was the cause of the *error*, must also
 be the original cause of all the *natural*
effects of that error. From whence it is a
 most manifest and unavoidable inference,
 that our conduct, however *at present* ap-
 proved of by us, must be *criminal* exactly
to that degree, in which our inward wrong
 judgment is *criminal*. And this leads me
 to observe,

THIRDLY, That there are cases sup-
 poseable, in which a man may act agree-

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ably to the sentiments and persuasions of his mind, and yet be justly said, upon the whole, to have an *evil* Conscience. By following *inclination* as his guide, and not exercising his *judgment*, by *imagining* and *presuming* a great deal, and *considering* and *reasoning* very little, he may work in himself a sort of *conviction* of the truth of very absurd and immoral principles. And whenever this happens, Conscience is most certainly *evil* in respect of its *judgments*; because it is dark and undistinguishing. It is *evil* with respect to its natural *rectitude*, and the *use* for which it was originally intended; because it is polluted and depraved. It may be fitly styled *evil* in a *moral* estimate, when lust and sensuality have obscured its light; and can have no pretence to the contrary character in any rational view, when its errors spring from such a perverseness of disposition, and ferret enmity to virtue, as argue an habitual and determined *dishonesty*; and make the Men solicitous and industrious to invent plausible arts, to *soften* and *varnish* over the disagreeable complexion of *vice*, and represent the *good* character in such *ridiculous*.

culous, awkward, and unnatural lights, as SERM.
may create either contempt or aversion. IV.

AND, finally, of such a Conscience as this it may be truly said, that it is *evil*, with respects to its *effects* and *consequences*. For let us suppose a man really to believe, that the distinction of good and evil is feign'd and imaginary----What true *peace* or *comfort* can result from this belief?----Is he not entirely depriv'd of the substantial and sublime *pleasures* of a virtuous mind? And what has he left in the room of these? Certain it is, that no *rational* delight can spring from vice. The sum of his happiness therefore must consist in this only----in a *dull* relief from inward anxiety, and the *absence* of remorse and disquietude. Or, if we suppose him to proceed a greater length, and that his Conscience directs and excites him to immoral practices as not only *lawful*, but a part of his *religious duty*, the same question still recurs----*What are his pleasures?*---Has he any thing more than the pleasure of a *slave*, when he performs a *hard task* that is imposed upon him? Or any other satisfaction, than that of having obey'd the command of an *ar-*

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bitrary and *tyrannical* master--- With the *trouble* and *fatigue* of acting against his natural sense of justice and humanity, and every dictate of his superior reflecting faculties? And can any truly *excellent* and *desirable* peace of mind spring from a religion, that offers violence to *Nature*? Any peace *comparable* to that, which is deriv'd from a gentle, benevolent, and merciful piety, in which the duties of *religion*, and the pleasures of *doing good*, are inseparably united?--- The very supposition is a manifest contradiction to reason, and experience.

AMONGST the many odd conceits and delusions, which have obtain'd in different ages of the World, Mankind have invented various schemes to introduce a *necessity* of *sinning*. When the *Atheist* was the inventor, the scheme was universal and incorrigible *Fate*. In modern times this word has been changed for others; for absolute, irrevocable, irresistible, *Decrees*, and such a kind of *Fore-knowledge* as implies the *infallible certainty*, i. e. the *necessity* of Human actions. But these are bold and groundless speculations, abstruse and perplexing, indeed, in the discussion of *particulars*, from
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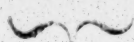
the natural weakness and limitation of Human reason; but *in general* of easy determination, because they are directly repugnant to the *experienc'd* frame of our Nature. And most surely if this scheme, upon *either* of the opinions above-mention'd, was right, it would signify nothing, whether Conscience was *blind* or *enlighten'd*; whether it gave the *preference* to what we call virtue, or to vice; nay, whether a man acted *conformably* to the dictates of his Conscience, or *not*, would be precisely the same in point of *guilt*; because he must always be *innocent*, whether he acts *with*, or *against*, Conscience, who does nothing but what he is *necessitated* to do, let this *necessity* arise either from the original constitution and frame of his mind, or from an overruling external agency.

But if the contrary be true, and there is a *moral*, as well as a *natural* System, the reasoning, which I have pursued, must hold good in all its branches --- *Involuntary* error must *excuse* --- *Voluntary* error must be *criminal* --- The *guilt*, in particular instances, must be strictly *proportionate* to the depravity and error of the *Will*. --- And when the mistakes and wrong judgments of

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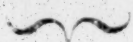
Conscience spring from *causes*, that suppose the entire want of integrity, and a temper quite averse and alienated from virtue, the plea of Conscience can have no manner of *validity*.--- And it will appear farther, that the only *necessity* of *sinning*, that can subsist amongst Mankind, must be introduc'd by this grossly erroneous Conscience; which is their own *voluntary production*, and not any part of *God's creation*. For the *natural faculty*, if it had been kept unclouded, and was duly consulted, would have been just and impartial in its notices and admonitions: Whereas when it is so perverted, as to dictate licentiousness and impurity, and confound the unchangeable order of things, we are not only led into dangerous and pernicious measures of conduct, but *unhappy every way*. If we act in *direct opposition* to Conscience, we must condemn ourselves as guilty of deliberate and resolute insincerity; and can indeed, in the nature of the thing itself, have no regard to what *is* right, if we wilfully contradict what *we believe to be* right. On the contrary, if we *follow the dictates* of an erroneous Conscience, when the error is not accidental and unavoidable, but springs from voluntary corruption, we shall
certainly

certainly be liable to the imputation of SERM.
guilt, before the equitable and candid tri- IV.
 bunal. And thus we become the means,
 by a vitious mismanagement, of a *real ne-*
cessity of sinning, consistent indeed with the
liberty of Human actions, because it is en-
 tirely owing to *ourselves*; we are the occa-
 sions, I say, of such a *necessity of sinning*,
 as neither *Fate*, nor divine *Decrees*, nor any
external causes, ever *have*, or ever *would*
have, establish'd.

LET me conclude with adding, in the
 last place, to what has been already said
 concerning the *sinfulness* of a *misguided* Con-
 science, that when it is so erroneous as to
 direct to flagrant immoralities, there is
 a great degree of probability, that the er-
 ror proceeds from some vitious prejudice,
 which must render it highly *criminal*. The
 reason of which is, that there is implanted
 in Human nature (and it appears, *more or less*,
 in every individual) a quick and strong sense
 of good and evil, with respect to their gene-
 ral and more remarkable distinctions:
 Which *sense* can scarce be eradicated by the
 utmost endeavours to impose upon our-
 selves, nor even by the prejudices of vice.
 When any *religion*, therefore, has so *strange*
 an effect, as to obliterate this deep impression,

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and the *authority of God* is absurdly prostituted to supplant and undetermine the *laws of Nature*; we may justly inquire with respect to all Mankind, who are possess'd of the proper faculties of Men, either --- Where is the *right exercise of reason*? or --- What is become of their *honesty*? And every thing of this kind, which cannot be ascribed to a *defect* in their *moral* capacities, may fairly be imputed to the *corrupt* influence of some *irregular* principle; or at best, to an *inexcusable carelessness*.

Act. xxii.

20.

LET us now apply this to the case of *St. Paul*, which will bring the whole inquiry to the point, in which it was design'd to terminate.--- He had been a zealous and inflexible *Persecutor*. The first time we read of him, we find him deeply engaged in a scene of *religious cruelty*; *consenting*, as he himself expresses it, to the murder of *Stephen* the first Christian martyr. This was in his early years: So that, it seems, he commenc'd a *Persecutor*, as soon almost as he was capable of engaging in business, or of being concern'd in publick transactions. After this he still continued pursuing the same methods of injustice and
bar-

distinctly consider'd.

barbarity, and was actuated by the wild fury of a violent and inhuman Persecutor, at the very time, when, by a miraculous appearance and voice from heaven, he was converted to the Christian faith: *He called out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*; and, according to his own account, *persecuting this way unto death, delivering into prison both men and women, punishing them oft in every synagogue, and compelling them to blaspheme, i. e. to play the hypocrite, and revile the name of Jesus, which they inwardly ador'd, and through exceeding madness persecuting them, even unto strange cities? ---* And yet he says in the text, that he had *lived in all good Conscience before God, until that day.* He must then, in his own opinion, have *lived in all good Conscience*, while he was stain'd with the blood of the innocent, and acting the part of a raging and merciless oppressor. But could a conduct so reproachful, so shocking, to Nature, be really justified upon any principles of virtue, or religion? By no means. And so the Apostle has directly and strongly intimated to us, by styling himself, upon the account of these heinous and bloody cruelties, *the least of the Apostles,*
who

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1 Cor. xv.

9.
Ephes. iii.8.
1 Tim. i.

15

who was *not* meet to be called an *Apostle*, less than the least of all saints, nay, the chief of sinners--- But if it be true, that he was the chief of sinners, the difficulty again returns, how it was possible for him to affirm with justice, that he had lived in all good Conscience before God, during the time that he was influenced and transported by his frantick persecuting zeal.

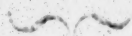
To which the obvious answer is this, as appears undeniably from the severe censures which he afterwards passed upon himself; --- That he consider'd his Conscience as good only in one single view, i. e. as he acted with a good intention, and steadily pursued what his erroneous inward guide directed him to as right. He look'd upon all the Christians as guilty of *blasphemy*, which, by the law of *Moses*, was a capital crime. And while he continued in this mistake, it is not so very strange, that he should be misled, by the wrong application of a *Divine sentence*, to practise the same outrage and violence, which others have been often prompted to by *superstition* and a *false religion*: Which, being a pretended superior principle, easily controuls and subdues the natural sense of moral

moral duty, even when strength of *appetite*, and *vice*, and *prejudices* of other kinds, uniting their utmost efforts, are not able to suppress it.---However, though *St. Paul* seems to have offer'd it as some *extenuation* of his guilt (and indeed it was the *only excuse* he had to make) that the enormities he committed proceeded from *ignorance*; it is evident, notwithstanding, that he thought his *ignorance*, and the prejudices he had laboured under, to have been in a great measure *voluntary*: Since he could with no propriety, or colour of reason, have charg'd himself with being *the chief of sinners*, if he had either been *invincibly ignorant* of the malignity and infamy of his offences; or his *will* had no concern in the commission of them. And thus this whole affair is easily reconciled by laying together, in one view, all that *St. Paul* hath said of himself; and it perfectly agrees with the general account that has been given, in the foregoing discourse, of the *innocence*, or *sinfulness*, of an *erroneous Conscience*.

I SHALL conclude with observing upon the particular case now before us, that we, in these latter times, have found

S E R M.

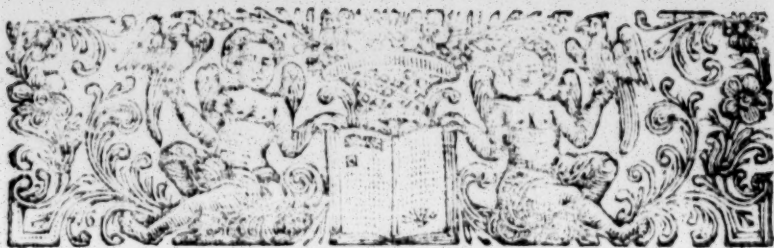
IV.



found by melancholy experience, that the persecutions of the *Jewish bigot*, in the days of his blind prejudice and unbelief, have been too exactly imitated; while the example of the *Christian*, and the *Apostle*, has been most shamefully disregarded.--But let it be always remember'd, that whatever, in some *special* circumstances, may be urg'd in behalf of the *Persecutor*, nothing can be pleaded in favour of *persecution*. St. Paul's principles, and his conduct form'd upon them, were not the less *detestable*, because his intentions were *upright*. And a religion, that (like that of the church of *Rome*) inspires rage and cruelty, must, at least in one respect, be worse than *Atheism*--- because an *Atheist* may still retain the common sentiments and impressions of *humanity*, which such a barbarous religion *effaces*.



S E R M.



S E R M O N V.



The influences of the Spirit entirely persuasive and moral ;
and its fruits of the same kind
with the dictates of natural
Conscience.

EPHES. V. 9.

*For the fruit of the Spirit is, in
all, goodness, and righteousness,
and truth.*



Y the *Spirit*, which St. Paul opposes to the *Flesh* considered as the spring and source of *moral evil*, we must understand the Intelligent principle in man, enlighten'd and assisted by the Spirit

S E R M
V



SERM.

V.

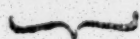

Spirit of God. And when it is said, that *goodness, and righteousness, and truth*, are the fruit of the Spirit, each of the terms, having an extensive meaning, may denote the *whole* of virtue and religion; which, in *different* views, exactly suits with *all* these characters.--- It is justly stiled *Goodness*, as it is lovely and amiable, and productive of peace and happiness --- *Righteousness*, as it is fit in itself, and agreeable to the dictates of right reason --- and *Truth*, because it is founded on the real existence, the settled order, the natural relations and dependencies of things. And it may not be improper to remark on this occasion, that let the immutable *ground* of moral obligation be called the *Truth* of things, the *Fitness* of things, moral *Rectitude*, or moral *Beauty*, the general foundation in *all* must be, in a great measure, the same: Because as, on the one hand, whatever is *agreeable* to the *real nature* and *constitution* of things must, of necessity, be a specimen of *right* behaviour; and whatever is an instance of *right* behaviour must, by as plain a necessity, be so far, a *justly proportioned* and *beautiful* character; so, on the

the

the other, nothing can possibly be considered as *amiable*, or raise in us an idea of moral *Beauty*, but what is, likewise, an unquestionable specimen of moral *Rectitude*, and exactly corresponds with *Truth*, and *Reason*.

S E R M.

V.



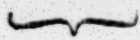
BUT it is most probable, that the Apostle only intended, by the expressions in the text, the *particular virtues* of *equity*, *beneficence* and *mercy*, *truth* and *fidelity*; comprehending in his design (as the reason of the thing must imply in it) *every other* particular virtue of the *like* moral and unchangeable obligation. This, I say, is highly probable, because in the parallel passage several *particular virtues* are distinctly enumerated---*The fruit of the Spirit is love---peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*---I shall only add farther, by way of introduction, that some of the best *Greek* copies, and most antient versions, read---for what is, in the text we follow, *the fruit of the Spirit*---*the fruit of Light*. And, indeed, as *St. Paul*, in the verse immediately preceding, tells the *Ephesians*, that they were *sometimes* darkness, but now were light in the Lord;

Gal. i.

22, 23

SERM.

V.



and exhorts them just after, continuing the use of the same metaphor, *to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of* darkness; the word *light*, for these reasons, is most agreeable to the context, and seems to have been the *original* reading. But, on which side soever this be determin'd, the case upon the whole is still the same. For *the fruit of Light* can be nothing different from *the fruit of the Spirit*, mention'd in the parallel text above-cited. And on the other hand, those who are *born of the Spirit* are, in the scripture phrase, the *children of light*: And those who *walk in the Spirit* are said, also, *to walk in the light*. From whence we may justly observe,

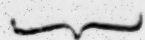
IN the FIRST place, that the *assurances* which we receive from the *Spirit*, either in the attempting, or perfecting, the reformation of evil habits and practices, and throughout the whole course of a religious and virtuous life, are entirely *rational*, and can have only a *persuasive* and *moral* influence. They co-operate with our own *deliberating* and *reflecting* powers, illuminate, improve, and convince the *understanding*; and, by representing in a *clear* view important *principles*, and *motives* adapted to our constitution

tution as Intelligent Beings endued with freedom of choice, they inspire good resolutions, and carry them on to such a degree of strength and constancy, as at length surmounts all difficulties, and renders the ways of piety and universal righteousness easy and delightful. This is undeniably the case with respect to the *aids* and encouragements, that are graciously afforded to Mankind, by the *external revelation* of the Gospel. And if, at *any time*, the merciful Father of our Spirits is pleased to have a *direct* and *immediate* communication with the mind, or appoints *the same* to be maintained by any particular Being, as his *Angel* and *Minister*; no other account can be given of it, consistent with his perfect *wisdom*, and the *regular* and *harmonious* operation of his Providence, than this---that it is in a way agreeable to the *frame* of Human nature, *gentle*, *soft*, and *persuasive*, not *controuling* or *obstructing* the free use of reason, but, by the help of *Grace*, *standing* alone, influencing the will, and moderating all the *affections*.

We may talk of this point as a *Mystery*, in a *sublime* strain and without *ideas*, as long

SERM.

V.



as we please. However, if we reflect impartially, we shall, I believe, find it *impossible*, that *rational* creatures shou'd be mov'd to any branch of virtue and right behaviour, but according to the scheme which I have now propos'd; unless we suppose, that some *præternatural* strong INSTINCT is excited within them, and that they are acted by a *blind impulsive* principle, *without*, or *above*, reason: The consequence of which must be, that their conduct is neither *intelligent*, nor *moral*; can neither be denominated *religion*, nor entitle to a *reward*. It appears then to be a truth founded in *Nature*, and concurring both with the doctrine of *St. Paul*, and with the wisest conceptions we can frame of God's moral character and government---That whatever is, really, a *fruit of the SPIRIT* must, also, be the *fruit of LIGHT*.

AND from hence it follows, that, in all those instances, in which we are determined to the exercise of particular virtues, or animated to zeal and devotion, by *false* principles, our virtue, zeal, and devotion, *thus* excited, or *so far* as they are owing to the force of *such* principles, cannot, upon any
just

fruits of the Spirit.

99

just ground, be ascribed to the *Divine Spirit*. SERM.

The influence we feel may be *strong, efficacious, and transporting*, and terminate in producing some of the *genuine* fruits of *righteousness*; but it can, with no colour of reason, be stiled a *Divine* influence, when it springs from *error* and *delusion*.

V.
~~~~~

For let us talk clearly and intelligibly upon the subject--- How is it that *wrong* principles can operate upon the mind in such a manner, as to produce so *good* an effect?

Why only thus;---by being consider'd as *just* and *right* principles--- as *important* principles of Natural or Revealed *Truth*-- as principles that *ought* to determine our resolution and conduct-- and are in *themselves*, and in their *direct tendency*, a *fit* and *proper* means to promote Religion, and the practice of the Moral virtues. But the whole of this (upon the supposition now made, that they are *erroneous* principles) is, in terms, a contradiction to *reason*, and *nature*, and an *equal* estimate of things, and, especially, to the *infallible certainty* of the *Divine* knowledge: And, consequently, an *influence*, that involves in it so much of deceit and imposture, must (*so far*, at least,

SERM. as it is grounded on such *deceit* and *im-*  
 V. *posture*) proceed entirely from the weak-  
 ness and prejudice of Human nature, and  
 can, by no means, aspire to a *heavenly* ori-  
 ginal.

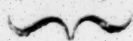
I MIGHT instance in sentiments that are generally known to prevail, and to be zealously espoused, among *ourselves*. But my design at present being only to illustrate the point before us, which the giving *of-*  
*force* to any, and thereby infusing needless *prejudices*, may rather perplex and darken; I shall content myself with putting a *re-*  
*late* case.---A *Roman-Catholick* believes, that, in what we call the sacrament of the *Eucharist*, instead of the elements of *bread and wine*, he receives the very *sub-*  
*stantial body and blood* of Christ. *This be-*  
*lief* may be a means of exciting in him an ardent and humble devotion; the strong and lively devotion, which is occasioned *scarcely* by an *aligned* and *irrational* faith, may make him more strict and assiduous in discharging *the* *obligable* duties of religion, and prompt him to acts of *real* goodness; and when he finds his affections *vigorously* moved, and that they serve to  
 fix,

fix, to enliven, to support, *pious* resolutions, it is not at all unlikely, that he will be inclined to impute what he *feels*, and what works so *efficaciously* within him, to a *Divine* impulse. And, indeed, the *devotional* writers of that Party have been apt to make pretences that are equally extravagant, and to indulge themselves in a most transcendent and sublime *Enthusiasm*.---But what must a *Protestant* think of this? Can he hold *Transubstantiation* to be a monstrous corruption of the true doctrine of Christianity, to be fruitful of all absurdities, and flatly repugnant to reason, sense, and experience; and can he represent the *adoration of the Host* as superstition at least, if not idolatry; and yet justly admit at the same time, that the *impressions*, which are caused by this *wrong* belief and *superstitious* adoration, come *directly* and *immediately* from *above*? It is *impossible*.---The same reasoning holds good with respect to all other *errors*. For it is a maxim of eternal and invariable certainty, and if there be any first principles in arguing this must be one, that all inward *ardors*, *transports*, and *excitements*, which are *purely* the effect and



SERM.

V.



energy of *falsehood*, by what name soever they deserve to be distinguish'd; can, at least, have no claim to this honour, of being consider'd as the *immediate* dictates and operations of the *Spirit of Light and Truth*.

I MAY proceed one step farther in the way of *general reflection*, and add to what has been already said, that *false* principles of religion, in one shape or other, are too commonly entertain'd. This the *multiplicity*, the wide *difference*, the direct *contrariety* of religious sentiments, that obtain in the Christian world, incontestably demonstrate. And farther, the *right* and *genuine* principles are often *disguis'd* by artful glosses and refinements, or *deprav'd* by spurious additions; which blend, and mingle together, a confusion of *Truth* and *Falsehood*. Or, at least, if they happen to be retain'd, in their strict original *purity*, and *justly* interpreted, such *consequences* are frequently extorted from them, as, in a great measure, prevent their natural use and efficacy. For it is not an unusual thing, to see groundless *inferences*, that are weakly deduc'd from good principles, usurp the weight

weight and influence of the *principles themselves*, as the *spring* and *rule* of action :

Which amounts to the same, in effect, as a man's having nothing else but *misguided* and *erroneous* sentiments, to determine and regulate his course of life. As, therefore, it has been plainly proved, That when virtue and piety proceed either from *corrupt* principles, or from *false consequences* substituted in the place of true principles, the *motive*, or *determination* to virtue (which *so far* is *error* only) cannot be ascribed to the Holy and infallible *Spirit* of God : As this, I say, has been plainly proved ; the many and various cases that occur of this kind, wherein it is absurd to suppose a *Divine* influence, should, one would think, be allow'd by all Christians to be a standing and unquestionable evidence of the *natural strength* of the Human mind, and the *force* of its resolutions ; and that, as it agrees best with reason, with the very idea of religion, with the universal strain of the Gospel, (which is address'd to us as reasonable creatures, furnished with proper *capacities* for *action*) it is likewise a truth confirm'd by fact and observation, that Man, by the *in-*

SINCE, *Internal powers* of his mind, and the aid of his *natural faculties*, can rise, and cultivate, &c. &c. improve to a considerable degree in self, religious and amiable dispositions.-- So far is he from being (as some have thought) *incited* duty, to the disparagement and reproach of his Nature, to represent him) *free* only to do evil, but with respect to piety and true goodness, in a state of *total infirmity*.

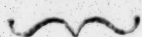
I assure I may not be understood as intending to insinuate any thing, in what has been said, against the doctrine of *Discretion*, graciously afforded to Rational Agents in the discharge of their duty; to enlighten the understanding, excite good affections, support and encourage undertakings, strengthen the resolution of the sincere and well-disposed; and, by all, to advance their *moral rectitude*, which is both their supreme felicity, and the ultimate design of their creation. On the contrary, I firmly believe, that this doctrine, which, in general, is clearly and strongly inculcated in the Christian Revelation, is also, in itself, highly *reasonable*. For as it is probable from the best lights of Philosophy, that



that the *continual operation* of that Infinite Being, who made the universe, is absolutely necessary for maintaining the established laws and order of Nature, and holding together the frame of the material World; it is natural to conclude, that on *particular occasions*, when his goodness directed by consummate wisdom may fitly incline him to it, and preserving the entire use and exercise of their inherent faculties, he *acts* likewise upon the moral. And, besides, no opinion can more exactly correspond to the idea we have of him as the *Father* of Intelligent Beings, concern'd for their happiness, and desirous of their true perfection. Nothing suits so well with his peculiar complacency and delight in Persons of virtuous characters, as this thought; that he sometimes, by an immediate access to the mind, communicates such *strength* and *aid*, as renders their virtues as *easy* and *pleasant* to themselves, as they are beneficial to others. The wisest of the Heathens, therefore, have expressed their sense of this truth, guided merely by *Nature's* light. But notwithstanding the certainty of the doctrine in *general*, what I have asserted may still hold good

SERM.

V.



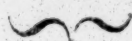
good---that all pretences to a *Divine* assistance are unsupportable, *so far as erroneous principles determine our choice, and are the sole motives to action.* And my insisting so largely on this subject will need no apology, when it is consider'd that it may help to determine (as I have before observed) some important controversies, subsisting amongst Christians, about so *essential* a point as the *Moral agency* of Man, which is the necessary foundation of all *law and government*, whether *Divine, or Human.* We may observe,

IN the SECOND place, that those things which are described, in the text, as *the fruit of the Spirit*, are no other than *Moral virtues, Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth*; things of *real substantial* excellence, *God-like* in their nature, and *unchangeable* in their obligation. It was to awaken Mankind out of their lethargy, occasion'd by manifold superstitions and vices, and to inculcate a strict regard to the above-mention'd *primitive* and *essential duties*, that the *Son of God* came down from heaven: And it was worthy the *Spirit of God*, and the *ultimate end* of his commission, to inspire

inspire the principles and habits of the same most excellent and amiable virtues.---

SERM.

V.



Chap. v.

22.

It will perhaps be objected, that, in the parallel text in the Epistle to the *Galatians*, St. Paul speaks of *Faith*, likewise, as a *fruit of the Spirit*. But to shew that this does not in the least interfere with what I have advanced, it will be only needful for me to suggest these two remarks; (1<sup>st</sup>) That *Faith* frequently signifies in the Scriptures, not an assent to the truth of propositions, but the virtue of *fidelity*. And thus it is natural to understand it here, since it stands connected and ranked with other *moral* and *social* virtues, such as *love*, *peace*, *long-suffering*, *gentleness*, *goodness*, *meekness*, and *temperance*. However, let us consider it (2<sup>dly</sup>) in the sense of the objection, as denoting a *belief* of the Gospel; and it will still amount to just the *same*. For the Faith, recommended in the New Testament, is neither believing by *chance*, nor from *presumption* and a high-strain'd *fancy*, nor from *constraint* and *force*; but such a persuasion, as is built on *reasons* sufficient to convince a *fair* inquirer, and which proceeds from a *disinterested* and *ingenious* temper:



SERM. V. temper: In which view of it, it is undoubtedly of a *Moral* nature.

~~~~~ BUT though it appears from hence, that *morality* is a *spiritual* attainment; and that to represent it as a trivial thing, of inferior and diminutive excellency, is really reproaching the *Spirit of grace*; yet the language of *modern* Christianity happens, in this respect, to be vastly different from that of *Apostolical* Christianity. The account, which the Gospel itself gives, is plain and easily comprehended. But if a man was to enumerate *the fruits of the Spirit*, according to the catalogue given of them, in these *remote* times, by some Expositors of the Christian scheme; it might look to an indifferent person, who was not acquainted with his *design*, as if he *directly* intended to describe the several kinds and degrees of *religious Enthusiasm*. For what are they -- but *sudden suggestions*, *strong sensible impressions* upon the mind, *extasies*, *irresistible impulses*, and the like; which *disturb* the understanding, and sometimes *excite so vehemently*, that they throw all into a confusion; and, by their *violence*, are supposed to *control* the will, and lay a *tyrannical* yoke on all our faculties and passions.

BUT

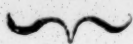
BUT allow me to ask, in the FIRST place, where we find the least hint, in the authentick doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, of these pretended *irresistible impulses*, which are so contrary to *Nature*, and impossible to be reconciled with *sedateness* of thought, or the *calm* and *deliberate* exercise of virtue? Is our being exhorted not to grieve, and *quench, the Spirit*—an argument that his influences are *inextinguishable*, and operate with a *necessitating* force? Or is our being commanded to *work out our salvation*—a proof that it is entirely wrought out for us, without the concurrence of our own *agency*? If in any case, recorded in the New Testament, we might expect to find intimations of this nature, it must, surely, be in the *miraculous* conversion of *St. Paul*: But *here* the evidence not only fails us, but appears to be clear on the *opposite* side. For the Apostle himself, in his apology before King *Agrippa*, that he was *not* disobedient unto the heavenly vision; plainly intimating, that his *freedom of choice* still remain'd with him; and, of consequence, that his conversion was, properly, an act of *virtue*, and not effected by the

SERMON.
V.

Eph. iv.
30.
1 Thess. v.
19.
Phil. ii.
13.

Act. xxvi.
10.

SERM. *uncontroulable energy of an Almighty*
 V. *power.*



AGAIN, where do we read, that *the fruits of the Spirit* are *sensible and distinguishible impressions* made upon the mind --- *strength of passion, transports, and inward fervours*? The *Scriptures* encourage no such pretensions; and *Reason* directly opposes them. *Reason* plainly teaches, that these are *uncertain and fallacious* marks, by which no just judgment can be formed. For inward *heat and raptures, sudden emotions, and unexpected suggestions*, may be purely *mechanical*; and accounted for, like other vicissitudes and changes in the Human frame, from the general laws of *Nature*; and, particularly, from the vast influence which *fancy* has upon our *sensations and passions*. And, surely, it must be a very surprizing and preposterous height of confidence, to rest on any thing as the *criterion and test* of our being *regenerated*, and *Divinely* directed, if we are not certain (as here it is impossible we shou'd be) that it cannot spring from *mechanical* causes, but necessarily requires a *supernatural* interposition.

ADD

fruits of the Spirit.

III

ADD to this, that the marks, which we are now speaking of, are no less *dangerous*, than they are fallacious and deceitful. They give a handle to every wretched *Enthusiast* to impute his ravings, and follies, and wild starts of imagination, to *the Spirit of the living God*. And thus they *consecrate* delusion and imposture, and, if it be of a licentious and impure tendency, enable it, with the more ease, to extirpate the natural seeds of virtue, and corrupt the morals. They are dangerous likewise in this respect --- as they divert us from attending to the substance of religion, by employing all our concern about inward *feelings*, *warm frames*, and *fermented spirits*, which have no relation to it. Finally, they are of very bad consequence as to the peace and comfort of our minds. For when the inward heat is cool'd, and the passion, that is ascribed to a *Divine* quickening, subsides (as it must unavoidably do, because Nature cannot long continue in a *violent* state) then *darkness* covers us, and complaints are made, that God hath *withdrawn the light of his countenance*---And there is a transition *alternately*, and owing
alto-

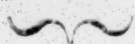
S E R M.

V.



SERM.

V.

John iii.
7, 8.

altogether to the fixing a *false rule* of judgment, from a state of sanguine and lively hope, to a state of languid and gloomy *despair*: Upon these accounts, our blessed Saviour wisely instructed his disciples to determine this *critical* question --- Whether they were *born of the Spirit* --- only by the *moral change* that was effected in their tempers, and habits, and outward behaviour. *Marvel not*, says he to *Nicodemus*, *that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again*. [For the thing has nothing so profoundly *mysterious* in it as you seem to imagine, but may be explain'd by a *familiar* instance.] *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Which is as if he had said, The operations of the Spirit are indeed *imperceptible* to sense, and not to be *distinguish'd* from a man's own exercise of his natural faculties; but they are visible and certain in the effects, or *fruits*, which they produce; in the *fruits* of morality, and a universal conformity to the dictates of reason, and the laws of God --- or, as the
text

text expresses it, in *the fruit of goodness, and righteousness, and truth.* SERM.
V.

BUT this leads me to another observation, with which I shall conclude : And that is, -- That the way I have taken of considering this subject is the only one that can give *strength and credit to Religion*; which can never be supported with honour, nor effectually recommended to wise and unprejudic'd judges, but by advancing *Morality*. On the contrary, the representing *religion* as having a certain incomprehensible and *mystical* sublimity --- as more *spiritual* and *refined* than mere moral virtue, --- and distinct from it -- must, of course, destroy the *respect and confidence*, which are otherwise due to *religious* characters. And this melancholy and reproachful consequence of so strange and injudicious a conduct is, already, too visible, and plain from experience. For it is the remark of a very great and admired writer, that -- *If we are told a Man is religious; we still ask, "What are his Morals*?"* -- But there could be no *possible* foundation for such a

* Char. Senfticks, Vol. II. p. 6

SERM.

V.



bitter *sarcasm*, by which the most venerable name, and the best cause in all the world, are treated with *scorn* and *ridicule*-- If religion was always described as a reasonable service; in which moral obligations maintain'd their proper rank, and were acknowledg'd to be an *essential*, nay, the *superior*, part.

MEN of thought and ingenuity ought to be *above* being misled by mere *show* and outward *appearance*; which is the just character of the *ignorant* and the *superficial*. And if they argued impartially, upon *the truth of things*, and not upon *Popular prejudices*, they would quickly discern, that Religion, consider'd as it is in itself, must aid and strengthen every *Moral Tie*. For it retains every *motive* that *Morality*, in the *separate* notion of it, includes, arising from either-- its *beauty* or *use*; its agreement with the natural *order* and *relations* of things, its advancement of *personal* perfection and happiness, its tendency to promote the *Publick* good:-- And to give the greater force to all these, it adds another highly *rational motive*, and that is, the authority of God, the wise and merciful

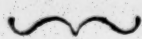
GOVERNOUR

Governour, the righteous and impartial judge, of Mankind. And if religion, fairly represented, had only its *direct* and *genuine* influence, and was practis'd in its full *extent*, the state of the question would deserve to be *alter'd*: And when we heard, that a man had *honest* Moral *principles*, and was a person of *natural justice and good temper*; instead of acquiescing in this, for our more complete satisfaction, as to the solid ground of reposing *confidence* in him, we might, *reasonably*, be solicitous to know farther; "*Whether he was religious and devout?*" Indeed, the *noble* author above-mention'd was pleas'd to say, that this is a *question we seldom think of*.^{*} And, as we are apt to think but seldom of other questions, that are not only *pertinent*, but of the utmost *importance*, the fact, perhaps, may be in a great measure, as he has stated it. But from what does it proceed?--From the *true nature* of religion? This cannot be pretended, without betraying extreme weakness, and want of reflection. It must therefore, spring entirely---either from *our own* igno-

^{*} Characteristicks, *ibid.*

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rance of religion; or *other mens* corruptions of it by superstition and vice. But notwithstanding both of these, it may, when it is rightly explain'd, be the most *natural ground*, and the strongest *guard*, of mutual faith and confidence. And I will venture to assert, upon the reasons already produc'd, that the *Mere Moral Man* (if such a one there *is*, or *can be*) without *religion*, is not able to give the *same security* to the *World* in general, of his honesty; to his *Country*, of his steady and uncorrupted duty; or to his *Friends*, of his inviolable honour and fidelity; as he can do, who is both *Moral* and *Religious*. And the *Christian* character, in particular, can be consider'd in no other light, without doing it an unpardonable *wrong*, than as most friendly to *Human commerce*, and calculated for the most complete preservation of all our *natural* and *social* rights; since *the fruit of the Spirit*, which essentially belongs to it, is expressly said to be the *Moral virtues* that support the order and happiness of Societies--- *viz. Goodness, and Righteousness, and Truth.*

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S E R M O N VI.



Of Anger.

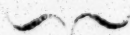
E P H E S. iv. 26.

*Be ye angry, and sin not : Let
not the sun go down upon your
wrath.---*



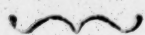
It will be found, upon reflection, that the *whole* of Religion is little else, besides the right conduct and government of our *Affections*, and *Passions*. If these are well regulated, the natural consequence will be *Piety, Order,*

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and *Happiness*; and, in every case, the manner in which they are allowed to operate, their habitual and prevailing influence, determine the character to be either *virtuous* or *vicious*. Thus, for example, if our supreme *Love* be placed on what is most *excellent* and *amiable*, and has the greatest *merit* to recommend it; it must, of necessity, center in *God*, a Being of all possible perfection, the spring of life and joy, the eternal and original Fountain of good. On the contrary, if it be fixed on *Riches* as its ultimate object, it degenerates into the vile Affection of *Covetousness*; if on worldly *Honour*, it is the vice we call *Ambition*; if on *Pleasure*, we shall quit all those generous and exalted pursuits which refine and dignify our nature, and be abandon'd to *Luxury* and *Intemperance*.---In like manner, if *Shame*, *Fear*, and *Detestation*, are justly excited, we shall be chiefly influenced by what is, *in itself*, reproachful, a *real* and *eternal* disgrace to our Reason, and Moral powers, and not so much by the *false* sentiments and customs of the World, and *arbitrary* notions of Honour and Dishonour; and must look on
such

such pursuits as are the necessary source of confusion, remorse, and misery to Intelligent Beings, and on the displeasure of the Infinite and Almighty Governour of the universe---as the greatest of all evils. So that the *Love*, and the *Fear* of God, which are the substance of true piety, the foundation and support of a regular, uniform, and inflexible virtue, appear to be nothing more than the proper management and conduct of the *Passions* : Which is an undeniable proof, that we ought to consider *Self-government* as a fundamental and essential point, on which all *Religion* depends.

THE matter might be put in a somewhat different light by shewing, that when the Passions are perverted, when they are wild, head-strong, and *ungovern'd*, they must, in the nature of things, destroy our regard to *Religion*, and interfere with the most important obligations of *Morality* ; and that while such corrupt principles are indulged and cherished in the *Heart*, it is as absurd to expect any true sentiments of piety, any steady moderation, righteousness, and beneficence, in the *outward Behaviour*, as that order should naturally

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spring from confusion, or light from darkness. This might be distinctly illustrated, by examining the direct tendency of *particular* Passions. But as it would be too long a digression, I shall only observe with respect to *Anger*, the proper subject of the present discourse, that it is attended with the most dreadful and fatal consequences--in its *first transports*, if it be not immediately check'd and controuled---but especially, when it *settles* in a canker'd, black, habitual *Malice*; that it *hurries* the Mind more than any other Passion, and operates with uncommon *violence* and *disorder*, and consequently, in its *excesses*, it must, in a very peculiar manner, indispose us for the service of the God of *Peace* and *Love*, and for a devout, affectionate, and delightful contemplation of his excellencies; which require the utmost calmness and composure, the most *undisturb'd*, *clear*, and *free* exercise of our rational Powers: And, finally, that it is utterly inconsistent with that *mild*, *soft*, amiable disposition, which is absolutely necessary to beneficence, and *humane* offices.---The *rough* and *boisterous*, and the *gentle*, *tender*, Passions cannot, possibly, subsist

subſiſt together. For either our kind Affections will get the aſcendent, ſo as to ſweeten the temper, and reſtrain *unruly Anger*; or that, in the end, muſt efface the impreſſions of humanity, and fix in a habit of *peeviſhneſs*, in a *fiery* ſpirit impatient of contradiction, and a conſtant diſpoſition to *rage*, *revenge*, and *cruelty*. Here then, our ſtricteſt *guard*, all our *judgment*, and niceſt *circumſpection* are neceſſary. And for our better direction in this *difficult* branch of Self-government, I ſhall inquire,

FIRST, IN what caſes Anger is a *lawful* principle; or how far it may be *innocently* indulg'd.

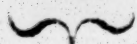
SECONDLY, I ſhall ſhew, when it becomes *ſinful*; or is indulg'd *immoderately*. And,

IN the THIRD place, Propoſe ſome *Remedies* againſt the *exceſſes* of this Paſſion.

FIRST, I am to inquire, in what caſes Anger is a *lawful* principle; or how far it may be *innocently* indulg'd. It is very plain,

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I think, from the New Testament, that the Christian Religion does not *absolutely* forbid Anger in *all* circumstances, and on *all* occasions; but only in its *extremes*. This may be fairly inferr'd from the text itself. For when the Apostle exhorts to *be angry, and not sin*, or, in other words, to beware of *sinful Anger*, he gives a clear intimation, that there are certain *seasons*, and *degrees*, in which this Passion is not *criminal*; that there may be indignities of so *flagrant* a nature, as will be a complete *justification* of it; and some instances of such *heinous* abuse and injury, that the most patient and candid temper, the most generous and improved benevolence, cannot pass them by without discovering marks of its *Resentment*. In like manner, we find St. *James* advising Christians---not to *extirpate* Anger entirely---but only to be *slow to Wrath*. To which we may add, that Anger is expressly ascribed to our Saviour himself, who was a perfect pattern of all moral virtues, and especially of *gentleness* and *moderation*; and chargeable with none of the *sinful* imperfections of Mankind,

Jam. i.
19.

Mark iii.
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kind, with none of the *extravagances* of Human Passions.

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WHEN therefore we see in the *same* scheme of religion such passages as these---

Let all--Wrath and Anger--be put away from you; But now you also put off all these, Anger, Wrath, Malice, &c; I will, therefore, that Men pray every where lifting up holy hands, without Wrath or Anger--

Ephes. iv.

31.

Coloss.

iii. 8.

1 Tim.

ii. 8.

When, I say, in the *same* scheme of Religion, we find these passages, which seem, at first view, to represent *all* Anger as *in itself* unlawful; we are obliged by the same general rule that we use in interpreting all authors whatsoever (in order to preserve a *consistent* sense) to understand them only of the *excesses*, the wild ungovern'd transports, of this Passion. If we go farther, and explain them *strictly* and *rigorously*, in direct *opposition* to other parts of the Revelation, we make Christianity confused and unintelligible. And besides, that it both disgraces our Saviour's *Conduct*, and dishonours his *Religion* by setting it at variance with itself, such an interpretation is contrary to the evident *reason* of the thing; which teaches us, that Anger is not *absolutely*

SERM. *lutely* criminal.--In what cases, and to
 VI. what degree, it is a *lawful* principle, I
 now proceed to consider.

AND in order to settle this point to our satisfaction, it is necessary that we examine --how far it may be called a *natural* Passion. I do not mean by this, what may arise from *peculiar* habit of Body, and so be *constitutional* with respect to *particular* Persons; but a *universal* Passion, that is interwoven with the very frame of *Human nature*. For whatever we may think of *singular* and *accidental* propensities, which, perhaps, were originally acquired by our Ancestors by an *intemperate* way of living, and transmitted down, according to the ordinary course of Nature, to their *innocent unfortunate* posterity; whatever, I say, we may think of these, we have the utmost reason to believe, that every principle, which appears to belong to *Human Nature as such*, and is not the effect of a high uncommon fermentation of the spirits, and a feverish heat of blood, may, within certain bounds, be *lawfully* indulged.

Now this I take to be the case as to *Anger*, which may be described thus:

“ An

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“ An *Emotion* and *Displeasure* of mind, on
“ an apprehension of some *wrong* intended,
“ or executed, against ourselves, or others,
“ for whom we are concern’d; and such a
“ *Resentment* of the *injury*, as *excites* us
“ to procure the *punishment* of the Offen-
“ der --- so far as it is necessary for self-
“ defence, for our future security, and to
“ promote the general peace, good order,
“ and welfare of Society.” It is the first part
of the description only, that can be properly
said to relate to the *Nature* of the *Passion* it-
self; the latter branch pointing out the *end*,
which it was intended to serve; which *end*
must also be consider’d as the *just bound*,
and *measure*, of every angry resentment.
And what I have here asserted is all those
Moralists can mean, if their meaning be
rational and warrantable, who give this
account of *Anger*, that it is “ a desire of
“ *Revenge*.” For to punish only for the
sake of *punishing*, to desire the *misery* of
any, from an inclination to see them suffer
merely because they have injured us, without
designing either *present redress*, or preser-
vation from *New insults*, or without any
view to the *good* of Mankind --- This is
down-

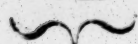
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downright *Ill-nature*, and *Malice*; and can be defended on no principles either of *Reason*, or *Christianity*. It argues a *base* and *savage* disposition, that is inconsistent with all just pretensions to humanity and mercy. But such a *sense* of injuries, as I have before described, not only discovers itself, to some degree, in *all* Mankind, so far as our experience and observation reach (and therefore may be esteem'd an *original* principle in Human Nature) but tends *directly* to the Publick good.

THE first *Emotion*, upon any abuse and indignity offer'd, seems to be an *instinct* implanted in most *Animals*, as well as in *Men*. And nothing plausible can be urged, to prove it to be our duty to suppress *this* altogether; because it cannot be done without altering and new-modelling the *Human frame*. Nor is it *fit* indeed, that the *Passion*, or *Instinct*, which we are now speaking of, should be extirpated; since it is adapted to answer very valuable purposes. For as it is a *strong intimation* that we think ourselves wrong'd, it may justly be expected, in many cases at least, that it will prevent the farther *progress* of the injury;

injury ; and that the guilty Person will put some *restraint* on himself, for fear of the consequences of *heightening* our Anger.

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--- The wisdom of God is therefore eminently display'd, in making the *marks* of this Passion so *visible*, that generally, with all the *art* we can use, we are not able to *conceal* it ; because it is designed as --- an *immediate* check to rudeness and violence. To which I may add, that the first *Emotion* is wisely ordain'd to serve another *use*, and that is, to excite us to *repel* injuries, in cases where an *immediate* resistance is required, by a more *warm* and *vigorous* self-defence.

AND as for a *Resentment* of abuses and wrongs, it is frequently, in the way in which I have stated it, of eminent *service*, to discourage *insolence* and *disorder*, maintain private *right* and *property*, and secure, to the Honest and Peaceable, the advantages of Civil life. Whereas a tame, *unresenting*, *unmanly* submission under the greatest provocations, would be treated by Persons of obdurate, or arbitrary, Tempers, or of boisterous Passions, with *Scorn* and *Cruelty*. It would probably draw on
fresh

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fresh *insults* and *oppressions*: So that neither *virtue*, nor *order*, nor *Publick happiness*, could be supported. --- I shall only add, That the *warmth* and *Resentment*, which we feel on being injured, has a *direct* tendency to raise, within us, a strong *abhorrence* of every instance of *base*, *ungenerous*, and *abusive* conduct. For if we are so struck with it in *others*, when we happen to be affected by it; we must, naturally, one would think, condemn it in *ourselves*. Those, especially, who have the *quickest* and *keenest* sense of *wrongs*, ought, of all Men, to be the most careful to avoid every distant appearance of *Disrespect* and *injury* to their Fellow-creatures. And there can be no doubt, but that what I have now mentioned was one design of the God of *Nature*, in making us so *susceptible* of *impressions* of this kind. --- So that though the more *immediate* spring of *Resentment* may, oftentimes, be *Self-love*, or considerations which are chiefly *Personal*; it is, in its *Consequences*, a *Publick* principle, calculated for the *common* good of Mankind. Having thus shewn, that some degree of *Emotion*, and some *Resentment*,

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on receiving injuries, are *expedient*, and *allowable* : I proceed to

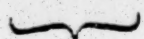
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THE SECOND thing proposed, *viz.* To inquire, when they are carried to an *Extreme* ; or, when our *Anger* becomes *sinful*, and is indulged *immoderately*. And

FIRST, The Passion of *Anger* has an *undue* prevalency, when it breaks out, with violence, on every *seeming* provocation ; when it is under so little command, that the most *trifling* circumstance will blow it up into a *flame*.--- The only thing that can be said in excuse of this is, that it may be owing to an unhappy *natural Constitution* ; for which great allowances are to be made. --- But to this I answer, That supposing it to be a *constitutional* disorder, it is such a one as ought to be *corrected* ; because Persons of so unruly a Temper are not fit to live in *Society* : They will be continually *disgracing* themselves, and *offending* others, by their extravagances. So that if They do not use their sincere endeavours to bring themselves to a more cool and composed frame, and to allay the fury of this *distemper*, the pernicious consequences

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of which are so visible; whatever foundation it may have in their *original make*, they are as justly chargeable with guilt, as if it was entirely *of their own contracting*.

Again, *SECONDLY*, *Anger* is undoubtedly criminal, when it *exceeds* the *nature* of the supposed injury, by which it is excited. This may be done various ways, and particularly --- when the wrong is but *imaginary*, and aggravated into a *real* fault by our Pride, and ungovern'd heat of temper --- or when it is not a *designed* affront, but springs from ignorance, an officious impertinence, carelessness, want of thought, and the like; which the persons, who thus *accidentally* offend, would, perhaps, upon a gentle admonition, ingenuously *acknowledge*. Under one, or other, of these heads, we may easily range a great part of those supposed indignities, by which the Passions are inflamed and exasperated to a *prodigious* height, and which are so *cruelly* reveng'd. And if we make no distinction between *involuntary* offences, and those that proceed from a *deliberate malicious intention*; considering the giddiness and levity, the inattention and folly, the false senti-

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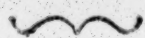
VI.

sentiments and prejudices, of the generality of Mankind -- *friendship, peace, and harmony* must be for ever banished out of the World. But let it be allow'd, that the abuses which we *resent* are *real*: They may, certainly, be capable of several *mitigations*--- The person, whom we complain of, may be of the same *hasty* and *impetuous* temper with ourselves --- He may be naturally *suspicious*, and imagine that he sees something in our conduct which gives him a just right to be *angry*--- Our behaviour may, really, have been so *unguarded*, as to afford ground for such *jealousies*; that he is slighted, imposed upon, and treated rudely and ungenerously---Or he may do that in an *intemperate ferment* of the blood, which is very far from his *natural* and *general* disposition; and which, when he grows cool, he is heartily *sorry* for---All these (though they may not *altogether excuse*) are, however, so many *alleviating* circumstances, that ought, in equity, to *mollify* and *abate* our Anger; and if they are not considered, and allowed their due weight, it is evidently *citious*, and *excessive*. I shall only add under this head, that some (which are called) *injuries*, are so



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flight and trivial, that they scarce deserve any *Resentment*; and to overlook them entirely will be of much greater use, than to *Retaliate*. For to insist upon *punctilios*, and demand an adequate and rigorous satisfaction for every *scornful look*, every *hasty word*, every little instance of *disrespectful behaviour*, from whence no ill consequences of any considerable moment can be suppos'd to follow, is the direct way to strengthen prejudices, and perpetuate a spirit of animosity and dissention; and, of course, it must increase the *disorder*, and *detriment* to *Society*. Whereas a *calm* and *generous* indifference in such cases as these (which are most commonly beneath a *wise* man's regard) may not only bring the offender to a sense of his indiscretion, but be a means of preserving the *Public peace*.

THIRDLY, Anger is a *criminal* Passion, not only when it exceeds in *degree*, but likewise when it exceeds with respect to its *duration*. For while its more violent emotions continue, the Man is *unfit* both for exercises of religion, and for a right discharge of the offices and duties of his particular station, and character; the longer it rages,

rages, he is render'd *so much the more incapable* of sedate thought, and recollection: And if such fits return *frequently*, and are, withal, *so stubborn*, as not to be easily remov'd, it is to be fear'd, that they will end, at length, in a *constant perturbation* of mind. The most hot and cholerick temper may be cool'd and moderated by a prudent *care*, and steady *opposition*; but the more we give way to it, it will necessarily take the deeper *root*, and, according to the known and experienc'd course of Nature, must *grow up*, by degrees, to a *Habit of tumultuous Passion*. St. Paul has therefore advis'd us in the text, *not to let the Sun go down upon our Wrath*--lest it should work itself into our inward Constitution, and become an establish'd and ruling principle within us. To which I shall add, (as having some affinity with this part of the argument) that in order to avoid the *excesses* of Anger, it may be prescribed as a good *general* rule, that we do not suffer it, in any instance, to gain such an ascendancy, as to controul the *exercise* of *reason*; and that, be the foundation of it ever so just (unless in cases where

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an *immediate* self-defence is necessary) we *defer expressing* our resentment either by words or actions, till we are able to reflect calmly, and have recover'd the due command of ourselves. For while we are transported beyond the *use* of *reason*, we must unavoidably err, in innumerable cases, both with respect to the *occasions*, and the *degrees*, of our Anger; and as we are not capable of considering and *distinguishing* rightly, it may fall, indiscriminately, on the *innocent*, and the *injurious*.

AGAIN, FOURTHLY, Anger may be highly *criminal*, when it is neither (*absolutely* speaking) excessive in *degree*, nor in *duration*--merely by its being *unseasonable*, or very *indecent* in particular Circumstances.-- As when it is *indulged*, with evident marks of *Perturbation* and *Discomposure*, by Persons *actually* employ'd in the administration of Justice; which requires the *coolest* attention, and most *dispassionate* temper--When we give a loose to it in the presence of those who are so much our *Superiours*, that it is treating them



them with *disrespect* -- When we pay no regard to *difference* of *Characters*, in shewing our Anger -- And when, upon *trifling* provocations, and forgetting the ties of *gratitude*, we behave towards our *Benefactors*, whose former favours have been so considerable that they ought to obliterate all sense of *lesser* injuries, with exactly the same *warmth* and *height* of *Resentment*, as we do towards *others*, to whom we are no way *obliged*. -- Such a blind and *undistinguishing* Anger, as it confounds all *order*, and is inconsistent with a regular discharge of *relative* duties, on which the well-being of Societies directly depends, must be vitious and inexcusable.

BUT, *Finally*, Its most malignant and fatal *extreme* is, when it begets a *settled ill-will* to our Neighbour, and degenerates into *crudelty* and *revence*. Though our blessed Saviour was *angry* with the *Pharisees* on the account of their hypocrisy and villainy, in designing to accuse him of *Profaneness*, for being a friend to Mankind, and performing *beneficent* miracles on the *Sabbath-day*; yet, he still

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Mark iii.

5

retained kind and tender sentiments of *pity and compassion*: He *lamented* their inveterate, and almost incurable, prejudice, and had a *generous concern* for their happiness. For we are expressly told, that while he *looked round about on them with Anger*--He was GREIV'D for the *hardness of their hearts*. And, indeed, the ultimate view of all *just* Resentment is the *reformation* of offenders, or, if that cannot be effected, the *restraining* their malice, and *discouraging* the like evil disposition in others. If therefore we form *premeditated* schemes of mischief, and pursue any with *vengeance*, for the *unnatural* pleasure which we take in their *misery*; our fury is quite *barbarous and diabolical*. A baser, blacker, and more detestable complexion of mind can scarce be imagined; since it is directly contrary to the excellent character of the Supreme Being, and to every thing that is *good*, and *amiable*. Thus have I pointed out distinctly the *sinful extremes* of Anger: The next *natural* step is,

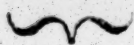
IN the THIRD place, to offer some *Remedies* against the *excesses* of this Passion.

AND

AND I cannot but recommend it, as SERM. one of the most important of all, to mor- VI. tify *Pride*. *Proud and haughty scorner is* Prov. xxi. *his name, says Solomon, who dealeth in proud* 24. *Wrath*.---This vice, as it is *extravagant* in its expectations, which Mankind are not often inclined to gratify, finds infinite *occasions* of Anger in the *minuteſt* circumstances; it magnifies a *heedleſs* expreſſion, and an *unmeaning indolent* behaviour, into heinous and unpardonable crimes; and is withal *inſatiate* and *unrelenting* in its Revenge. And could the moſt Paſſionate root out but *this one* evil principle, they would neither have ſo *quick* and *keen* a ſenſe of injuries, nor carry ſo *long* and *deſperate* a Reſentment of them. They would ſtand leſs upon ceremony, and outward tokens of reſpect and ſubmiſſion; and, being conſcious of their own imperfections, would be more mild and candid, more condeſcending and favourable to the infirmities of others.

AGAIN, conſider what an *indecent* thing it is to be tranſported to *exceſſes* of Anger?--How it ſtains our honour as *Men*, and leſſens *particular characters*, which might, otherwiſe, be rank'd among the moſt deſerving



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serving --- How, besides disfiguring the very external *bodily* form, it renders the *Mind* quite distorted and irregular -- How it fills it with *confusion*, and, by clouding the understanding, obscures *all the glory* of our intelligent Nature: So that all that is manly and generous is lost in a wild tempest of Passion.

REFLECT, likewise, on the pernicious consequences of *unruly* Anger, which are these-- the loss of inward serenity and composure; breaches of friendship; irreconcilable enmities; the most fatal disorder and violence naturally accompany'd with shame and remorse: To which this thought is very proper to be added, that the first ungovern'd transport, which we blindly follow, may be the absolute ruin of our innocence and peace for ever.-- *A man of great Wrath*, says *Solomon*, *shall suffer punishment: For* [as he is continually running into embarrassments and difficulties] *if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.*

Prov. xix  
19.

LET us consider farther, in order to check and controul *rash* and *intemperate* Anger, what great allowances we all need for ourselves; and those *especially*, who have the misfor-

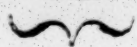
misfortune to be addicted to this vice. Let us frequently meditate on the wonderful patience and forbearance of God, notwithstanding our numerous and aggravated offences; and on the example of Christ, the adorable author of our religion, who was *meek and lowly in Heart*; who *pray'd* for his enemies and persecutors; *who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatned not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously*. And to these moderating and composing reflections let us join strength and firmness of *resolution*, and maintain an habitual guard over our temper; that we may never be hurried, by its eagerness and impetuosity, beyond the bounds of reason and discretion. It is highly expedient (over and above what has been already suggested) that Men, who are subject to the impulses of strong *Passion*, carefully avoid every thing that has a tendency to *irritate*, and *excite* hasty and furious Resentment---all petulant and contentious *disputes*, which raise a spirit of contradiction, and that, in hot constitutions, produces rage and insolence;---all inflaming *diet*, and intemperate *revellings* --- and the

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Matt. xi.  
24.  
Luke  
xxiii. 34.  
1 Pet. ii.  
23.

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the *company* of such Persons, as are of the same turbulent fiery disposition; whose Anger, by their violently opposing each other, will be the more increas'd, and rise, very probably, to a shameful and fatal pitch of extravagance. Whereas if they choose to *associate only* with Men of a gentle, calm, obliging behaviour, all whose Resentments are under due command; they will not only keep out of the way of innumerable provocations, but, perhaps, be ashamed of their own excesses. The beauty of such *amiable* characters will naturally attract and engage their esteem, and strongly excite to an imitation of them.

To conclude ; To the observation of these rules, it will be of great use to add sincere and fervent *prayer* to God, who, as he framed Human Nature, must thoroughly understand every part of its composition, and be able to influence all its springs of action --- That he would graciously assist us to regulate every disorder, to assuage every rough torrent of *Passion*, and cultivate mild, benevolent, and peaceful principles ; that after having enjoy'd, in this World, the *natural* advantages of a *meek and quiet*

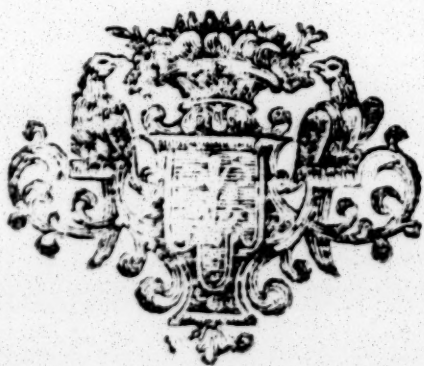


## Of Anger.

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quiet spirit, in the inward satisfaction that attends it, and the respect and kind affections of our fellow-creatures, we may be admitted into the mansions of perfect love, and tranquillity; from whence *Anger*, *Clamour*, and *Malice* shall be for ever banished; and where there will be nothing, that can possibly disturb the *friendship*, *harmony*, and *happiness*, of the refined and glorious Inhabitants.

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## S E R M O N VII.

\*\*\*\*\*!\*\*\*\*\*!\*\*\*\*\*!\*\*\*\*\*!

The time when Christianity was made known proved to be the *fittest*, from the state and circumstances of the World.

---

G A L. iv. 4.

*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son.---*

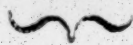
 H E Goodness of God is not only eminently displayed in the great and signal blessings which he hath conferred on Mankind; but it may appear, likewise, in the very *time* fix'd upon for bestowing his favours.

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favours. For we all know, from our own experience, that the *deferring* a benefit frequently enhances the *value* of it, and, of consequence, heightens our *obligation* to a Benefactor; and that an over-officious hasty act of goodness may miss of that valuable end, by being the transport of a *first sentiment*, or the effect of *instinct*, which, in all probability, it would have attained, if it had been more *slow* and *deliberate*. --- To apply this to the argument I intend to pursue. *Captious* men have been apt to abound in vain inquiries, and, among others of a like nature, to ask this question --- “ Why the Christian revelation, if it be really Divine, was not communicated *sooner*?” To which, St. Paul has plainly intimated, in the text, this solid and sufficient answer, That *preceding ages* of the World were not so *proper* for it: For in *the fulness of the time*, God sent forth his Son --- *i. e.* at the time prescribed and pointed out in the ancient *Prophecies*, not from mere *arbitrary pleasure*, but because it was, in itself, the *fittest*.

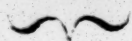
INDLED, if the Christian religion was *absolutely necessary*, in the nature of the thing

thing itself, to enable Mankind to know and practise what it is their *indispensable duty* to know and practise, we should have had reason to conclude, that it must have subsisted from *the beginning*; or as *soon* as this *necessity* commenced. But this is not the just state of the case; because the infinitely wise and righteous Governor of the World can require nothing of his creatures, but what he has given them *a capacity* to perform. The natural consequence of which is, that every man does his duty, and answers the end of that particular station in which he is placed, who acts up to the light and advantages which he enjoys, *whatever they are*----Christianity, therefore, was only highly *expedient*, and a singular blessing; but not strictly, and universally, *necessary*.

AND from hence it follows, that we cannot infer, either from the wisdom or goodness of God, that he was, in a proper sense, obliged *to grant it to the World at all*. For let us see how the argument stands: "The Christian revelation was a  
" signal *benefit*, and extremely *desireable*,  
" and therefore God was *obliged* to com-  
VOL. II. L " municate

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“municate it.” ---But why this conclusion? Are there not infinite *other* things, which, we are apt to imagine, would be of great advantage to particular parts of the creation, that are *never* granted? --- And why should it *not* be so? --- Has not the Supreme Being the absolute disposal of what is a matter of *pure favour*? Or do we make no distinction between acts of *favour*, and of *justice*? Surely there is a vast difference between them in the nature of things. For the one only *may*, the other *must* be performed; the one are *necessary* at *all* times, the other may be *proper* at *very few*; or fit to be granted only at *certain seasons*, and not at *others*.

THE granting a Revelation, therefore, was not a point of *equity*, but merely a consideration of *wisdom*. So that at whatever time it should appear to have been most likely to answer its grand *design*, that was, without doubt, the most *expedient* and *seasonable* for the promulgation of it. I therefore proceed to shew,

FIRST, That *when God sent forth his Son*, the World was, by various circumstances,



*at the fittest time.*

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stances, and a concurrence of preceding events, better *prepared to receive* Christianity, than in former ages.

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SECONDLY, That, on several accounts, it was most *honourable* to this excellent religion, that it should be proposed at *this time*; and that the appointing and choosing so *critical* a season, for this gracious interposition of Providence, contributed eminently to the *support* of the Gospel, and the *firmer establishment* of its authority in the understandings, and over the consciences of Men. And I may add,

THIRDLY, That *the time*, which the text speaks of, was the *fittest* period for Infinite wisdom to fix upon; because it was the most *proper* for the *propagation* of Christianity, for two reasons that are of incontestable weight: --- The FIRST is, that it could be *more easily* spread from one nation to another --- The SECOND, that it might make a *larger* and more *extensive* progress.

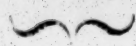
LET us now briefly examine, how each branch of this argument may be supported: Which will not only exalt and

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enlarge

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enlarge our idea of the wisdom and wonderful conduct of Divine Providence, by *plain instances* of the utmost consequence to virtue, and the happiness of Mankind; but must also highly corroborate the *more direct* evidence for the Truth, and Divinity, of our holy Religion.

THE FIRST thing proposed was to shew, That *when God sent forth his Son*, the World was, by a variety of circumstances, better *prepared to receive* his doctrine, than in former ages. --- There seems to have been a *scheme* laid, by that Infinite unerring Mind who saw the *events* of things from the beginning, to carry on and complete this *preparation*. It was the work of *ages*, and brought, by *gradual* advances, to its full *maturity*. And it will be useful for us to take a short survey of the *state* of Revealed Religion, from the *earliest* times, of which we have any authentick records. For, by this means, we shall be led to discern a regular *train* of events, that, all together, make an exact and beautiful *plan*, and conspire to one common *end*. There will be found un-

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questionable

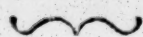
questionable marks of *connection* and *reference*, and consequently of *design*, in the several parts of this *plan*; which ought not, therefore, to be imputed to a blind and random *Chance*, but to some wise and skilful disposition.

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IMMEDIATELY after the Flood, when the whole race of Mankind was reduced to *Noah's* family, a *Revelation* of the fundamental truths of *Natural Religion*, and of the general immutable obligations of *Virtue*, seems to have been entirely *needless*: Because it cannot be supposed, but that they ALL acknowledged and worshipped the only Maker and God of the universe; and, besides, they had just seen the most stupendous and awful proofs of His *Power*, and universal *Providence*; and, by the desolation and ruin that had been brought upon the old World, who perished in the *Deluge* (of which there remained, every where, deplorable and most affecting *memorials*) they were sufficiently assured of the fatal consequences of *vice* and *Idolatry*.---- Having, therefore, no need of so general a Revelation, they had one suited to their *circumstances*: Containing a grant



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of *Animal* food ; --- ordaining that *Murderers* should be punished with *death*, (which was exceedingly proper to be enacted into a *law* with the standing sanction of *Divine authority*, when the inhabitants of the World were so *few*, and every *single life* was of such vast consequence to the *small* community of Mankind ) ---- and giving them gracious assurances, to dissipate their *consternation* and *terror*, and encourage *arts* and *industry*, that they had no reason to alarm themselves with the fear of a *second Deluge*, since it was the sacred and inviolable *decree* of Heaven, that *the waters* should not cover the face of the whole earth *any more*.

Gen. ix.

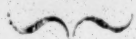
FOR some time after this, the World, from the established laws and course of Nature, could be but *thinly peopled* ; and, therefore, each having a sufficient share of *property*, he could have no particular strong temptation to invade the *possessions* of others. An artless and unaffected *simpli-city* of manners, *generally*, prevail'd. *Labour* was necessary to procure the supports of life ; *Idleness* and *Luxury* were, in a great measure, unknown, Mankind must have

have had too little *intercourse*, to be the instruments of corrupting each other to that *degree* of excess and disorder, which has since prevail'd. Of *polite* and *fashionable* vices there could, in *general*, be no great danger, when there were neither *multitudes* nor *superfluities* \*. --- *Superstition* and *Idolatry* were, however, introduced very early; to which the grosser and more unthinking part of the World were too easily perverted. But these instances of degeneracy were far from being *universal*. Many families still adher'd to the primitive Religion of Reason and Nature, and were untainted by the infection then *beginning* to spread itself. A *general* Revelation, therefore, was not so requisite in *this* state of things, as in *succeeding* ages, when Idolatry and Superstition not only increased,

\* To confirm the truth of these observations, it is worth remarking, that the only *considerable* number of wicked persons, that the Sacred History mentions in *this* period (where we have scarce any light, to our present purpose, from Profane History) were the *Sodomites*; whose dreadful and *miraculous* destruction was as clear and strong a *discovery*, as could be made, of the displeasure of God against their justly detested, and *unnatural*, crime; and render'd any other *extraordinary* revelation, on that head, altogether unnecessary.

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but became more *complicated* and *barbarous*. Nevertheless, some Persons of *character* and *influence*, sufficient to engage *attention* and command *respect*, were raised up to give a check to the *growth* of these enormities. Such a one was *Abraham*, a man of eminent *name* and *authority* in the East, whose *rank* and *virtues* were honoured and rever'd. --- And this seems to be *all* the *remedy* that was necessary to be applied in this *infant* state of the World, and in the *infancy*, too, of Superstition and idolatrous Worship.

BUT when Mankind multiplied, and form'd large societies; and, in consequence of this, Idolatry was *established*, and supported by the favour of *Princes*; and *Priests* were hired to *defend* it, which made it their interest to stupify and enslave the People; in this fatal *increase* of darkness and impiety, God *left not himself without farther witness* in that part of the World which was afterward most *noted*, and from whence, therefore, true religion might be most *widely diffus'd*. *Egypt* was, in those ancient times, the source of learning, and the liberal sciences; but, withal, the *nur-*  
*tery*



*tery and temple of Superstition.* Strange SERM  
 it is, indeed, that improvements in arts,  
 and extravagance of idolatry, should proceed from the *same fountain*; that a people should be ingenious, inquisitive, and discerning in *other* matters, and yet quite blind and infatuated in the affair of *religion*, which is plain and simple, and easily intelligible, *in itself*, before it is encumber'd and confounded by the addition of *Human follies*. But however just thus it was with *Egypt* in the first ages of its Fame: It communicated *learning*, and *false Gods*, to many countries; and, particularly, from thence it was, that Idolatry pass'd into *Greece*, and was propagated to all the *Western Nations*. --- Here, then, it may be thought fit that some peculiar and strong discovery should have been made of the true God; this being the *principal scene* of action, and spreading its *influence* far around it. And accordingly the wisdom of Providence order'd it so, that this people had sufficient means of better knowledge convey'd to them; first by *Joseph*, who, by a miraculous interposition of Heaven, was introduced

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duc'd into *Pharaoh's* presence, and obtain'd the chief place in his favour; and, afterwards, by the Patriarch *Jacob* and his whole family, who were brought to reside in *Egypt*. But when the *memory* of *Joseph's* services and supernatural endowments was so far lost, that the *Israelites*, instead of being protected, were, for pretended *reasons of State*, harass'd by a most oppressive and cruel servitude; then *Moses* was commissioned to perform such mighty works as created *astonishment* and *terror*; which asserted the supreme authority of the Maker of the Universe, and loudly declared the absurdity and danger of a corrupt idolatrous worship: And, by their being wrought on this most *renowned*, on this *publick* stage of the World, effectual care was taken to prevent all just suspicion of *imposture*.

AFTER this again, in the passage of the *Israelites* to the land of *Canaan*, an alarm was given to many *other idolatrous* nations. And the extraordinary events, by which the God of Heaven claim'd his due honours, which had been transfer'd to fictitious and impotent Deities; these extraordinary

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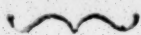
traordinary events, I say, from their very nature and surprizing circumstances, could not but be propagated to the *neighbouring* countries, and must naturally excite *wonder* and *curiosity*. — But *here*, as far as we can learn from history, the matter was forced to rest. For how far the more *remote* parts of the World were then *peopled*, doth not clearly appear from any authentick testimonies. Or if we should allow without evidence, and, perhaps, *against probability*, that they were plentifully stock'd with inhabitants, yet still, for want of an *open* communication, nothing farther could be effected.

WHAT wiser method, therefore, could be pursued at such a *juncture*, and after such *trials* to reform that celebrated people, from whom *truth*, if it had prevailed among them, was likely to have been spread (as *error* was actually propagated from the same source) to a greater part of the World, than from *any other* quarter; I would ask again, what wiser method could be taken, than to separate *one* nation from the rest by peculiar laws and customs, in order to maintain among them the acknowledgment  
and



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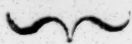
and adoration of the true God, and the general principles of Virtue and Natural Religion? When the most probable means of promoting an *entire*, or very *extensive*, *reformation*, had proved unsuccessful, the chief thing to be studied was, how to prevent a *universal corruption*; and to use the utmost precaution, by a constitution adapted to their circumstances and low conceptions, and by restraining their familiar intercourse with Idolaters, that *one* people, at least, might be preserv'd from the common taint: From whom rays of light should be *scattered abroad*, to illuminate, in part, the thick darkness that overspread the intellectual creation; from whom Divine discoveries, and just principles of religion, should be *gradually dispersed*, till the state of the World was *ripe* for a *general Revelation*, to restore Mankind to the primitive paths of virtue and happiness.

AND this is the point, to which the whole conduct of Divine Providence evidently tended. Things were so directed and disposed in the course of Human affairs, as that the revelations made to *Abraham*, and to his family and posterity, might

might be advantageous likewise to the *Gentiles*; and open the way for a *universal* reformation. For (1st) By the captivities and dispersions of the *Jews*, and their being mixed and incorporated with foreign nations, it is natural to conclude, that these foreign nations must have acquired some *general knowledge* of their religion. There is a spirit of curiosity working in all Mankind, that prompts them to inquire into the customs, genius, and *religious* doctrines and ceremonies of other countries. And, especially, when a strange people come to *reside* amongst them, it can't be imagined by any one that is acquainted with Human nature, that such inquiries will be neglected. The *vulgar* are fond of accounts of this kind, because they are always highly entertained with novelties; and the more *ingenious*, for their information and improvement. By this means, therefore, it is scarce to be doubted, but that *some knowledge* of the true God must have been communicated, and *better principles* of virtue established in the minds of benighted and superstitious *Gentiles*: Especially, as there is the greatest reason to believe,

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believe, that several of the captive *Jews* were zealous for their religion, and for the honour of the God of *Israel*, and would display his Supreme authority in so strong a light, as must have been calculated to convince the truly *Honest* and *Inquisitive*, whose minds were not quite stupified by *bigotry* and *vice*. When, indeed, we reflect on the fatal prejudices by which the generality are enslaved, in favour of the Religion of their *birth*, their *education*, and *country*, we shall not think it likely, that *very many* converts would be made; but, on the other hand, it is absolutely incredible, that the essential truths of Natural Religion, which are all *plain*, and certain deductions of *reason*, should not gain a *considerable* number of *Profelytes*, by being fairly proposed, and candidly examined.—Let it be consider'd again, that the captivities of the *Jews* were frequent, and that they had been known for *ages* before our Blessed Saviour's appearance, and in the greatest *Empires* of the World; to the *Babylonians*, *Greeks*, and *Romans*; by means of which, those useful principles that prepared the way for the

the



*at the fittest time.*

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the reception of Christianity, must have S E R M.  
been more *universally* spread. VII.

BUT there was another important event, that concurr'd with those already mention'd, and not only served to diffuse good general maxims of religion, but some idea of the *prophecies* of the Old Testament; and that was the translation of it into *Greek* by the command of *Ptolemy Philadelphus*, King of *Egypt*, in order to its being deposited in the Royal Library at *Alexandria*. For by perusing this translation, which many, doubtless, would be induc'd to do, as it was made by the order of so great a Monarch, and gave an account of the history and religion of so odd a people as the *Jews* were represented to be; I say, by perusing this translation, Men of *learning* and *ingenuity* might acquire that knowledge in a more complete degree, which was scatter'd among the *vulgar* more loosely by conversation.—And that what has been advanced, under these latter heads, is not mere *scheme* and *conjecture*, but has all the marks of probability that we can reasonably desire, is evident from the actual result of the whole, which is attested  
even

SERM. VII. even by *Heathen* Historians: viz. “ That  
 “ an expectation of a great Prince to arise  
 “ in *Judea*, prevail’d throughout all the  
 “ *East*, about the time of Christ’s coming.”  
 Now then it is undeniable, that the *pre-*  
*paratory scene* was brought to its *crisis*, and  
 due *perfection*—And therefore, in this *ful-*  
*ness of time*, God sent forth his Son.

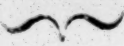
LET me add farther, that *Philosophy*  
 had been employ’d, with its utmost art,  
 to *civilize* the World, and *refine* the man-  
 ners of men. In a state of rude and un-  
 cultivated Brutality, there is generally a  
 resolute inattention to all *new* discoveries.  
 Bigotry, grafted on *gross Ignorance*, is al-  
 ways stubborn and untractable. Or else,  
 such a state of deplorable darkness is at-  
 tended with a stupid listlessness and indo-  
 lence, without any concern and thirst for  
*knowledge*. Christianity, therefore, in such  
 extremely disorderly times as these, could  
 scarce have had any chance for obtaining  
 a *fair bearing*; upon which account it was  
 utterly improbable, that it would be em-  
 braced and submitted to. But it was like-  
 ly to meet with more *candour* and *justice*,  
 when Humanity and Politeness prevail’d:  
 And



And *this*, it must be allowed, Philosophy had in a great measure introduced; but not a reformation in any important points of religion. Besides, *curiosity* was excited, and a spirit of *inquiry* was become more common; and as, together with this, juster sentiments of *Moral Virtue* were likewise propagated, there was a solid foundation on which to expect, that such a religion as the *Christian* would meet with the less opposition, because it fixes *Morality* on its right basis, and exalts it to its sublimest pitch.

Thus have I largely shewn, that at the time appointed, by the infinite wisdom of God, to reveal himself to the *Gentile* world, as well as to the *Jews*, Mankind, in general, were better *prepared* for a favourable reception of the Gospel, than in former ages. And I have made this topick the main subject of my discourse, because there can be no circumstance more material. For the *progress* of truth, in *some* ages and nations more than in *others*, has always been found to depend on a concurrence of several causes, that have led the way to it; and, particularly, on the *previous* enter-



SERM. VII.  tainment of some *right* and *just* principles; on *previous* softening of *prejudice*; and the increase of *civility* and *openness* of mind.

THE SECOND Observation, which I proposed, was this, That it was most *honourable* to the Christian Religion, that it should be proposed at the time when its pretensions were actually made known; and that the choosing so *critical* a season, for this gracious interposition of Providence, contributed eminently to the *support* of the Gospel, and the *firmer establishment* of its authority in the understandings, and over the consciences, of Men: Many *Objections*, that might, otherwise, have been raised against it, are *hereby* effectually silenced; and its *success* is a much fairer and stronger presumption of its *intrinsic goodness*, and of a commanding *Divine energy* accompanying the publication of it, than, as far as appears, it could have been in any *other period*, of which we have a distinct and particular account in history.

I SHALL begin with remarking, That, at *this time* Christianity was most likely

ly to be examined, and canvassed with SERMON.  
*care* and *exactness*, when *Philosophy* had VII.  
worn off a great deal of the barbarity of  
more ignorant ages; when the *science* of  
Morality was much *studied* and improved,  
and *diffutes*, and an ostentation of know-  
ledge, were grown fashionable. Religion,  
in all the branches of it, is an act of *reason*;  
and therefore the restoration of it to its  
*original truth* and *integrity* was *fittest* to  
be attempted, when *wisdom* and *rational*  
*inquiry* most prevailed. For *truth*, the  
more strictly it is searched into, and tried  
by the standard of right Reason, will ap-  
pear more *amiable*, and shine with a brighter  
*lustre*; and, of consequence, it is likely to  
make the *deeper* impresson, and to be a  
more *uniform* and *steady* principle of a  
pious and virtuous behaviour.

AGAIN, Had the Christian religion  
been promulged in *times* of *universal dark-*  
*ness*, or in *countries*, where scarce any  
traces were to be seen of *thought* and *re-*  
*fection*, or of any perceptions above those  
of mere *Animals*, its adversaries would have  
been apt to insinuate, that the progress  
which it made was owing altogether to

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the *foolishness* and *barbarity* of the people, among whom it was introduced; who had no rule by which to distinguish between truth and falsehood; and whose *superstitious* fears were soon influenced, and their *credulity* and want of *judgment* easily imposed upon, to mistake *cunning tricks* for *miracles*. But as it took deep root, spread, and flourished, notwithstanding the opposition that was made to it by the *bigotry* of the *vulgar*, and the *power* of the *great*, combined with the most renowned *wisdom* and *skill* of *Philosophy*; this is a triumphant and glorious circumstance, that gives it a distinguishing dignity, and shews the *uncontrollable* force and energy of *Truth*.

AND to mention but one thing more: As this excellent religion was not proposed to Mankind, till after *Philosophy* had made its *utmost efforts*, and was found to be *unequal* to the great work of rectifying epidemical and dangerous errors (For the miserable multitude still continued to be captivated by their *Priests*, and held depraved sentiments of religion, which, in many cases, corrupted their *moral* character) as, I say, Christianity was not proposed



posed to Mankind, till *Philosophy* had exerted *all its force*, and was found to be *weak* and *ineffectual* ; the *expediency* and eminent *advantages* of it can no longer be disputed ; nor, of consequence, the *obligation* we are under to receive, and improve with the devoutest veneration and gratitude, this *extraordinary* instance of the Divine favour and goodness.

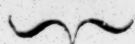
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I NOW proceed to the THIRD Head, *viz.* *That the time*, spoken of in the text, was the *fittest* for infinite wisdom to fix upon, because it was the most *proper* for the propagation of Christianity. — The greatest part of the known World were now united in *one empire*, under the *Roman* power : So that the *intercourse* between Mankind was more *universal*, and *travelling* to remote nations more *easy* and *commodious*, than they had ever been under any other of the great *Monarchies*. — In *this period*, likewise, the World enjoyed a degree of peace and tranquillity for a long while before unknown ; which was another very favourable circumstance for the *propagation*, and *settlement*, of the

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Gospel. For amidst the horrors and desolations of *war*, the minds of men are *distracted*, and their thoughts *fluctuating*, and *confused*. The general attention is engaged by *victories* and *triumphs*, or by scenes of *devastation* and *ruin*. The *fate of nations* is the point to be *decided*. The principal question *depending*, that employs speculations and inquiries, hopes and fears, is, which shall be established, *Liberty*, or *Servitude*. It is not to be supposed, that the generality will be *sedate* enough to examine, and pursue truth, with disorder and confusion all around them. The preachers of *new doctrines* must, *then* especially, be obnoxious to the *suspensions* and *resentment* of the *Governing powers*; every *innovation* will be represented as, in a *peculiar degree*, *dangerous*; and is likely to be suppressed by all imaginable methods of *craft* and *violence*: And, besides, the *communication* between countries, of *opposite* pretensions and interests, being shut up, the *propagation* of true religion can be but *imperfect* and *partial*.

Now all these inconveniences, which attend a state of *war* in general, were the  
*real*

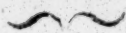
*at the fittest time.*

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real situation and state of things, for a long time before our blessed Saviour's appearance. But after the most polite and flourishing parts of the World had, for several centuries, been *disquieted* and *shaken* by frequent *revolutions* of empire, and *bar-rassed* with almost perpetual wars; in the reign of *Augustus Cæsar* these competitions and convulsions *ceased*. And THEN the Saviour of the World was born; the substance of whose commission was to assert the glory of the one eternal God, and promote *peace* among men; that amiable and generous spirit of *unconfined* Benevolence, which, if it prevailed, would make *cruelty* relent, bend stubborn *pride*, and allay the raging heat of *ambition*. And it is farther observable, that the *peace*, which now subsisted, was not only more *universal*, but continued *longer*, than had been often known in the history of *preceding* times; by which means, among others, Christianity became more established, till, at length, the *Roman* Power, that had severely *oppressed* and *persecuted* the professors of it, *submitted*, and *owned its authority*.

S E R M.

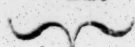
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AND now from what we have seen, with respect to the *past*, we may extend our view to *future* times. For as the Supreme Being must be at liberty to confer favours which could not be *claimed*; and as he has been pleased *actually* to communicate a Revelation; we have some ground to hope, that it *hereafter may be* (though we cannot from hence alone conclude, that it certainly *will be*) more *universally* diffused. And if there be any such *future* period, we may justly presume, from what, we are convinced, was the case at the *first* promulgation of the Gospel—that there will be sufficient evidence to convince thoughtful inquirers, that *this also* is the *fittest* season that could be fixed upon, to answer the gracious design of Providence.

THERE are several circumstances already *open'd* to our view, which demonstrate that even *now* Christianity might be spread vastly *farther*, than it ever could be, during the continuance of the *Roman* Empire.—A great part of the Globe is planted by Colonies of nominal *Christians*, which, but a few ages ago, was utterly *unknown*.

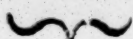
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And besides the late discoveries and settlements in *America*, the commerce and trade of *Christendom* has extended itself to very remote *Eastern Nations*; where the *Roman Arms* never penetrated; and where, it is probable, that the very *name* of *Heathen Rome*, even when it was in the Height of its Power and Splendour, was never heard of. Add to this, the modern improvements in *Navigation*, which procure us an *easy access* to these newly-discover'd Countries; the *intercourse* which we are capable of maintaining with the inhabitants, by the help of Persons skill'd in their several languages; together with the invention of *Printing*, the most effectual method of *improving*, and the easiest of *dispersing*, Knowledge—Which all *concur* to *facilitate* the propagation of the Gospel, *beyond* what could reasonably be expected in preceding antient times.

BUT the *critical period* for making Christianity the *universal* religion, does not seem to be *yet* come. Many *obstacles* remain; and several necessary *preparations* for this great event are *still* wanting.—However we ourselves can easily imagine

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a certain *conjuncture*, that *would be* proper ; and a *conjuncture*, that, it is far from being an extravagant strain of presumption to believe, *may* happen, considering the *frequent*, and at some times the *more surprizing* vicissitudes and revolutions in the course of Human affairs. “ For if the  
“ use of *Printing* became established, and,  
“ of consequence, ingenuity and freedom  
“ of inquiry gained ground, in the vast  
“ *Turkish* Empire, and both were transferred from thence to other *Mahometan*  
“ States ; and if those *Christians*, who are  
“ conversant with *Infidel* nations, would  
“ behave towards them with justice and  
“ generosity, and treat them like *Men*,  
“ and not, as if they were of an *inferior*  
“ species, like *Brutes* or *SLAVES* ; if they  
“ would cease from corrupting the *Morals*  
“ of the *Mahometan*, or of the *Pagan* Idolater, while they were persuading him  
“ to turn to *their religion* ; if they would  
“ give substantial and shining proofs, that  
“ they were not *wholly* intent on worldly  
“ gain, not influenced by a rapacious *Avarice*, nor fond of *Luxury*, nor devoted  
“ to *Intemperance* ; if, on the contrary,  
“ they



*at the fittest time.*

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“ they honoured their profession by the  
“ practice of those *engaging* virtues which  
“ the Gospel inculcates, and were affi-  
“ duous in improving in the minds of  
“ those, whom they call *Indian Savages*,  
“ exact notions of *morality*, and in in-  
“ structing them in the principles of *Natural*  
“ Religion, as the *first step* towards  
“ their embracing the *Christian*; and if,  
“ building on this *foundation*, they gave  
“ only such accounts of Christianity as  
“ were *connected* and *rational*, instead of  
“ discouraging *faith* by unnatural and bar-  
“ barous representations of the Deity, and  
“ affronting *reason* by senseless and incre-  
“ dible Mysteries:” Then we might just-  
ly apprehend, that the time was drawing  
*nigh*, when *over ALL the earth* (as the  
Prophet hath foretold) *there shall be ONE*  
*Lord, and his NAME one*; or, in the lan-  
guage of *St. Paul*, when *the fulness of*  
*the Gentiles shall come in*, and *ALL Israel*  
*shall be saved.*

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Zech. xiv

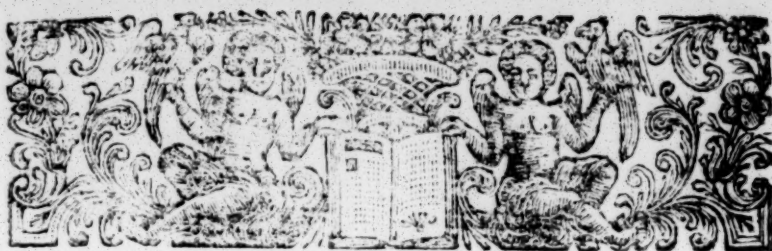
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Rom. xi

25, 26.

S E R-





## S E R M O N   V I I I .



The wisdom of God in the various ranks, and subordinations of Human life.

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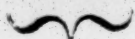
*—Yea, all of you be subject one to another.*

**T**HE Creator of the World, for the more glorious and clear display of his perfect and unlimited goodness, has form'd several orders of Intelligent Beings, possessed of various Endowments, and

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V I I I .  
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and Excellencies, and Capacities for happiness. This *Revelation* expressly teaches; and herein, as in most other points, it only corroborates, and carries to a higher degree of probability, the suggestions and intimations of *the light of Nature* itself.

FOR as we plainly see, with respect to the creatures *below* us, that there is a regular and admirable *gradation*, and, at the proper *point*, a direct *transition* from *one* species to *another*; so that where the *Rational* ends, the *Animal* begins, and appears to be *closely connected* with it in the scale of Beings; and this prodigious *chain*, that *links* the Universe together, is *continued*, without any visible interruption, down to things merely *Inanimate*: Upon observing this to be the *constant* and *unvaried* course of Nature, our *Reason* justly presumes, that the *only* defect, with respect to *extent* of existence, cannot lie in the *Rational* World; which is most worthy to be *diversified*; and wherein, a *variety* of *superior* orders must be the strongest and most illustrious proof of the Divine wisdom and benignity.—We therefore naturally conclude, that, in general,
the

the same *distinctions* take place *here*, as in the *lower* parts of the Creation ; *i. e.* that there is a *gradual ascent* from Mankind, whose reasonings are minute and confus'd, laboriously traced, and easily perplex'd, and their capacities narrow and confined ; that there is, I say, a *gradual ascent*, through several *intermediate* classes, to the *Highest* pitch of created *Intellectual* perfection, and *Moral* excellence.

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AND to *correspond* with this general Scheme, which gives us the most enlarg'd and exalted idea of the regularity, beauty, and magnificence of the works of God ; His Almighty power has established a *diversity*, not only *upon the whole*, but in every particular *rank*, or *kind*, of Beings : So that, in all, there is an exact harmony of *design*, and *operation*.

A *difference* of Powers, Characters, and Conditions, is especially obvious in the *Human* Species ; the *Individuals* belonging to which are remarkably *distinguished* from each other.--And from hence necessarily result preheminance, superior dignity, and authority in *some* ; and dependence and *subjection* in *others*. But then, as, in some sort,

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the dependence is, and ever must be, *reciprocal*; and *all* Mankind are strictly allied by *Nature*, kept close together by their *common wants* and *infirmities*, and indissolubly united in point of *Interest*, and the *universal good*; it must, upon these accounts, be acknowledged, that there is a solid ground, in *reason*, for the Apostle's exhortation in the text — That we should *ALL* of us *be subject one to another*.

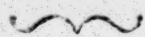
IN the beginning of this chapter, St. Peter gives the *Elders*, or *Bishops* of the Christian church, some excellent rules for the due and faithful execution of their office; a strict adherence to which would force a respect for it even from the *Infidel*, and the *Libertine*, as an office truly *honourable*, and eminently *useful*. Feed, says he, *the flock of God, which is among you* — *i. e.* “ Instead of distracting their minds by needless *Subtilties*, or amusing their curiosity by insisting on vain and airy *Theories*, instead of inflaming their zeal to a degree of rancour and insolence, and fomenting a Spirit of *discord*, by blind
“ and

“ and intemperate *disputes*——Inculcate
“ *sublime and amiable apprehensions of*
“ God, and *generous sentiments towards*
“ all Mankind: Inculcate the *great and*
“ *essential duties of the Gospel, and the*
“ *things which make for* PEACE: Incul-
“ cate the Subordination of the *Means of*
“ Religion to the *End, of Speculations and*
“ *Rituals to the eternal laws of Mora-*
“ *lity*: Explain the *peculiar doctrines of*
“ Christianity in such a manner, as to
“ shew that they are *consistent and rea-*
“ *sonable, and have all a practical and*
“ *purifying tendency*: And, by these me-
“ thods, Cultivate in those, who are un-
“ der your care, important and beneficial
“ *Knowledge, and the habits of universal*
“ *goodness*; which are the *health, the*
“ *strength, and life of the Soul*. — Neither
“ *starve, nor divide, nor scatter the flock*
“ *of God which is among you*; but *feed it*.”

The Apostle adds, — *Taking the oversight*
thereof, not by Constraint, but willingly;
not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind:
Neither as being Lords over God's Heri-
tage, but being ensamples to the flock. He
then assures them, that — if they were

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thus uncorrupt in their ministrations, and free from avarice and ambition; if, on the contrary, they had a sincere and disinterested concern for the advancement of Christianity, and the edification and welfare of the *flock*, *i. e.* of those, who are now stiled the *Laity*; and were exemplary for liberality and munificence, for humility, peaceableness, and moderation, and *declining*, rather than *greedily pursuing*, the luxury of wealth, and the pomp of Temporal grandeur --- They might justly expect, *when the chief Shepherd shall appear*, to receive a crown of glory that *fadeth not away*. Having directed the *Elders*, whom we, avoiding the plain *English* word, affect rather to call the *Presbyters*, of the Church; *St. Peter*, as the occasion was fair, and the advice natural and pertinent, exhorted the *Younger Sort* of Christians likewise: And his instruction to them was, that they should *submit themselves unto the Elder*; or, in other words, pay them all that respect and deference, whatever it be (and *no more* than that) which their Capacity, their Experience, and their particular Stations

tions and Characters, necessarily require. SERM.
Then follows the text, in which the Rule VIII.
is *enlarged*, and extended to *every instance*
of mutual deference and regard that is
proper to take place among Mankind, as
they are severally diversified by their Situ-
ation and Rank in life: --- *Yea, ALL of*
you be subject one to another.

BEFORE I proceed to explain and argue
this point more directly, it may not be
amiss to premise, in order to prevent some
gross mistakes, that there is a sense, in
which it may be truly affirmed of *all*
Mankind, that they are by nature EQUAL;
and that this *equality* is permanent and
unalterable. The violence of Oppressors
may, indeed, infringe it; or the Supersti-
tious, thoughtless, and slavish part of the
World may tamely give it up; but in
reason, and natural *equity*, it must always
remain the *same*. My meaning is this,
That there are certain *rights* that result
from our very *essential frame*, and which
depend not in the least on *voluntary com-*
pass, or any *extraneous* and *changing cir-*
cumstances; but, being inseparable from
the notion of Human nature *as such*, can

S E R M. neither be *alienated*, nor *abridged* : So
 VIII. that in every instance, which is properly
 ~~~~~ of this kind, it is impossible that one man  
 should be in a state of *just subjection* to  
 another, or to any Human Power. —  
 If it be ask'd, what these *Rights* are :  
 I answer,

THAT the first and principal are the  
*Rights of Conscience*. For as every man is  
 in his own *original* frame, and *wholly*,  
 and *only*, from himself, a moral and ac-  
 countable Creature ; it necessarily follows  
 (since without this supposition he can nei-  
 ther be *moral*, nor *accountable*) that he has  
 a sacred and unchangeable *right* to judge  
 and determine for himself. If he has a  
*right* to be of any religion at all, it is  
 self-evident, that he must also have a *right*,  
 after deliberate and mature inquiry, to  
*choose* his religion : Otherwise it can with  
 no more propriety be said *his* religion,  
 than *another Man's* understanding, tem-  
 perance, fortitude, generosity, and other  
*personal* qualities, can be said to be *his*.  
 Besides, if we take away this *right*, we  
 suppose that he is obliged to be religious,  
 and yet deny him the *only* means, by  
 which

which it is *possible* that he should be truly religious: For Religion is not a *forced* tie, not a blind implicit *servitude*; but *entirely* a *rational* and *voluntary* engagement. Nay I may add farther, that if Men *freely consented* to lodge a power, in the *Governing* part of Societies, to judge and choose for them in *all*, or *any*, points that are *purely* religious, and *bound* themselves to submit to the *Publick* decision; or if they *agreed* to confer a power to *oppress*, *disgrace*, and *deprive* any, of the *common* *privileges* of good Subjects, for opinions or practices that are not at all of a *civil* concern, but relate to *Conscience* only; the engagement, in both these cases, must *vacate itself*, and the grant be *iniquitous* and *evil*: Because they give up such Rights, as are absolutely *essential* to the *moral* Constitution of Human nature, and which, of consequence, they can have no *authority* to alienate and transfer; and might, with full as much reason, *constitute* another enormous and arbitrary Power, that, without making any distinction between *innocence* and *guilt*, should imprison and torment the *Body*, and destroy *Life itself* at pleasure.

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It appears then to be the plain result of the whole, That, with respect to *mere* Conscience, Mankind are under *no* Jurisdiction, but that of *Heaven*—— Among themselves they are *ALL* upon *a level*, and cannot be *subject one to another*.

IN like manner Men, *as Men*, have an *inviolable* Right to be treated with *Justice* and *Equity*. I mean, when I say *inviolable* --- *not* a Right, which Persons tyrannically and mischievously disposed may not acquire *a power* to limit or set aside;--- but such a one, as cannot, in *reason*, be opposed, or cancell'd; which *must* subsist in the *truth* and *fitness* of things, as long as *Human nature itself* subsists. And this Right to *strict justice* is not only *unalienable*, but, like the Rights of Conscience,--- *equal* in all. So that no man can warrantably give his *consent*, that another shall deprive him of the necessary means to preserve *life*, or arbitrarily invade his *property*, or deny him the reward *due* to his *merit*, or enslave and hurt him by *violence* and *oppression*; or that any *Society* shall refuse him protection and support against *injuries*, or punish him though he

is



is *innocent*, or treat his honesty and virtue as *crimes*: Because all such Conduct is repugnant to the Original and Eternal laws of *Nature*, which the authority and will of Man can neither dispense with, nor alter; it is, in effect, to destroy the World that God hath made, by introducing a *new* and *unnatural* Scheme of things, from whence nothing can proceed but universal Anarchy and confusion. — The Consequence, therefore, from the whole is plainly this, that with respect to the *claim* of *common equity* (*i. e.* whether it shall be *allowed* him, or *not*) the very meanest cannot, strictly speaking, be *inferior* to the greatest; nor *Subject* to the absolute determination and controul of any earthly Power.

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ONCE more: Every Man, consider'd merely as a *Man*, must have an inherent *Right* to *Candour*; to expect favourable *allowances*; and the necessary offices of *Humanity*, and *Charity*: Because his original frame is so weak and imperfect, that it exposes him to *involuntary* errors, and *unavoidable* wants and infirmities. So that to assert the contrary, to what I have

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now advanced, is to say in other words, that Mankind have *no right* to be treated according to their *Nature*; which is a gross absurdity even to common sense. And what is the general conclusion, upon allowing these premises? — Why it undeniably follows, that there can be no such thing, as a *natural* state of *subjection* to a *Tyrannical* Power; which commands with insolence, and an oppressive and lawless rigour.

But though *Subjection*, in all the instances already mention'd, cannot *justly* be expected, since it is introduced entirely by the follies and vices of Men; it must however, be evident from reason and experience, that there are *natural Subordinations* likewise in Human life, springing directly and *regularly* from the establish'd Constitution of the World. --- *Difference* of capacities, qualifications, and improvements, will, of course, occasion *dependence* of some upon others, and a proportionable degree of *Subjection*. --- *Different* measures of application and industry will, of necessity, form *higher* and *lower* stations. --- *Superiority* in respect

of property, influence, and usefulness to the Publick, must create a *diversity* of Ranks and Characters.--- From the several unalterable *relations*, in which Mankind stand to each other, there must arise *Prebeminence*, and *Subordination*.--- Nay, if we carried our reflections no farther than this *general* truth, that God has appointed Mankind to live together in *Society*, and, to that End, has planted within them strong *social* affections and instincts, the point would appear sufficiently plain ; because, in *all Societies*, there ever have been, and always will be, *various distinctions* of Condition and circumstance ; which indeed are *requisite*, not only to their prosperous and flourishing state, but even to preserve and hold them together. Suffer me now, to inquire briefly

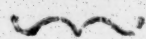
IN the FIRST place, For what *End*, it may reasonably be imagined, that the Infinite Creator hath ordained this *Diversity* ; and wherein the *wisdom* of such an appointment consists. Which will enable us

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SECONDLY, To apply the *Subjection* mention'd in the text, as the duty of All *indiscriminately*, to the different *States* and *Orders* amongst Men.

I AM FIRST to inquire, For what *wise Ends*, the infinite Creator has appointed so great a *Difference* of Stations and Circumstances in Human life. And, I think, one good reason which may be assigned, for the *Distinctions* made in the present Constitution, is this, --- That the beauty and excellence of the *Moral* character might be displayed more *conspicuously*, and in *several different lights*. Indeed, if we consider the matter *absolutely*, it seems highly expedient, in order to the forming a completely regular and well-proportion'd System, that there should be a general *analogy* and *correspondence* between the *Moral* World, and the other parts of the Universe. However this is not all; and though it be a circumstance of considerable weight, yet it might not perhaps be sufficient, of *itself*, and *alone*, to vindicate the frame of *Nature*. But the wisdom and goodness of the Author of
it

it appears *Supreme* and most *illustrious*, when it is added farther, --- That as the inferior Creation is more *artificial*, *elegant*, and *useful*, through its variety; so the *beauty* of the moral is more *distinctly delineated*, by its being diversified. Moral rectitude is so comely and amiable in itself, that it naturally attracts approbation and esteem, and excites a generous pleasure, in every view of it. So that in the more instances it is seen, its loveliness will be the more clearly discern'd; and this clearer discernment must be a more forcible and effectual motive to excel in virtue.--- Abstract *Theorists*, bewilder'd in the mazes of *Metaphysics*, might in many cases, for want of undeniable and standing examples, dispute the beauty and usefulness of it, and perplex the argument by crabbed and *specious* subtilties; but when its beauty and usefulness are exhibited, and pointed out as it were to our very senses, in *real* characters, this in a great measure *disarms* speculative Sophistry, and deprives it of that malignant influence, which it might otherwise have

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SERM. have on weak and inconsiderate, or on
VIII. presumptuous and conceited minds.

AGAIN ; The difference of rank and condition, from whence inferiority and subjection unavoidably arise, is best adapted to a state of Discipline ; in which it is design'd, that Mankind should be instituted in virtue, and train'd up and inur'd to the exercise of it, in order to their being hereafter advanced to a more sublime and perfect existence. As the tempers and complexions of Men are vastly various, a distinction of circumstances seems to be absolutely necessary for their proper improvement. There are some whose natural disposition is calm, generous, and communicative ; others there are, whose passions are vehement and impetuous : The first of these would be cramp'd, and render'd in a manner useless, if Mankind were in all respects upon a level ; and the latter would have too much scope, and run into dangerous extravagances, in elevations of Power, and the licentiousness of an affluent and independent state. To which we may add, that we oftentimes find Per-

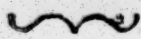
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sons, who behave *well* and acquit themselves with *honour* in *one* Circumstance, acting *meanly* when they are placed in a *contrary* Situation, and *staining* their Character to such a degree, as surprises all who knew any thing of their former good Conduct. For instance, a Man may be *grave* and *considerate*, *modest* and *humble* in Adversity, and grow *careless*, *dissolute*, and *imperious* in Prosperity. He likewise that was *generous* and *condescending*, and very *useful* to his fellow-creatures, while he moved in a higher Sphere, may sink so much *beneath* himself when his Condition is altered, as to forfeit all the Esteem and Respect which he had before justly acquired. So that we may conclude with great probability, that the appointing a *variety* of Stations in Human Life was the best method that could be taken, to afford *proper opportunities*, for Persons of *every* Constitution and Genius, to prove their Integrity in the most unexceptionable manner.

BESIDES, if this Scheme had *not* taken place, there could have been but little room for exercising those Moral Virtues, which

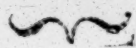
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which properly belong to a state of *Discipline*, as they are peculiarly adapted to *strengthen* the inward temper, and beget a confirmed habit of *resolution*: I mean, the *manly* virtues of Patience and Contentment, of Composure and Firmness of Mind under Discouragements and Difficulties. Nor could even the *Godlike* Dispositions of Generosity and Condescension have been cultivated by such various and improving trials, if there had been no Stations of *Dependence* and *Subjection*.

LET me subjoin to this remark one observation more, and that is, That the *Differences* of Rank and Condition in human Life are plainly calculated to promote the *general happiness*. For it is evident at first sight, that the Conveniencies and Comforts of our present Being would be prodigiously diminish'd, if there was not a provision made of a sufficient number of Persons, to be employed in *laborious* and *servile* offices. If this was not the case, the wants of the *Animal* nature engrossing almost totally our Reflections and Care, there would scarce be any room for the more *exalted Genius* to *display* itself:
Con-



Contemplative Men would not have *leisure* for illustrations of Religion and Morality, and Improvements in useful Arts and Sciences: So that the *intellectual* Principle in Mankind would be *unoccupied* and *unrefined*, and, thus far, upon a level; in proportion as their *outward Circumstances* were *equal*.--- But the most considerable point of all is this, That as there is a *larger Scope* for sublime and generous Virtue, upon supposing a *Diversity* of States and Conditions; and as there are likewise *more Opportunities* for *improving* Moral Goodness to its utmost extent; the framing the World, which was intended for a *probationary* Scene, after this Model, must have been the fittest expedient that could be devised, for advancing the *supreme happiness* of Mankind: Which consists unalterably in the internal rectitude of their *Dispositions*, and the exact and regular correspondency of their *actions* with reason, and the Law of God.

IT will still be ask'd, what ground there is for our being exhorted in the text *indefinitely*, and without the *exception* of any particular Characters, to be *subject*
one

SERM. *one to another?* To which it is sufficient
 VIII. to answer in general, That there may be
 a *Subordination* in *some* respects, where
 there is an evident *Superiority* in *others*:
 And as, besides this, the *Wants*, *Dependen-*
cies, and *Obligations* of Mankind are, in
 various instances, *universal*, and *mutual*;
 there must be, as I have before observed, a
 natural and solid foundation for the *Rule*
 prescribed. The Duty here recommended
 is, in *Inferiors*, a proper *Subjection*; among
Equals, *Respect*; and *Submission*; and in
Superiors, what, in our language, we
 would rather choose to call *Condescension*:
 Which I now proceed

IN the SECOND place, to explain
 more distinctly, upon the principles and
 reasonings contained under the former
 Head, the substance of which may be
 reduced to this general Proposition; That,
 in every Station, that *Submission* and
Condescension ought always to be prac-
 tised, which best *becomes* us, and will
 render us most *serviceable*, in it; or, in
 other words, which is the surest proof
 of our own *moral rectitude*, and tends to

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the *Common Good* of our Fellow-Creatures. SERM.
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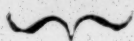
--- And what will this be, when the rule is applied to *Particulars*? ---- I answer (1st) That it is the evident duty of *Inferiors*--- To maintain a *humble, peaceable, and orderly* behaviour, and acknowledge, in a proper way, the *Superiority* of those who are in a higher rank, of whatever kind it be --- to pay a due deference to *superior Wisdom*, and submit to be instructed and enlighten'd by it; and if at any time they oppose Persons of this character, not to do it in a *positive* and *confident* manner, but with respect and caution, and a modest distrust of their own Abilities --- to reverence likewise *superior Goodness*, and propose it as a Pattern for Imitation --- and to express all becoming Regard to such as are *advanced* and *dignified*, either by the more immediate direction of *Providence*, or by the wise Establishments of *Society*. This behaviour is absolutely necessary, because it is the Basis and chief Support of the *relative* and *social* Virtues in inferior and subordinate Characters.

As it relates to the conduct of *Equals*, the Duty recommended in the text is this

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Rom. xii.
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--- To preserve an *affable* and *obliging* Deportment; to be mild, gentle, and *compliant*; and rather to *decline*, than *assume* Preeminence: For these are the most likely means to secure a constant harmony, and establish mutual esteem and friendship. This is the express doctrine of *St. Paul* in his Epistle to the *Romans*, who has advised Christians to be *kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly Love* --- in honour preferring one another. Every *modest* Man must be conscious of some *secret imperfections* that *lessen* his own character; and this will naturally incline him, according to the doctrine of the same Apostle elsewhere, to *esteem* those, who are in other respects his *Equals*, to be *better* than himself, and, consequently, to yield to them the claim of *Superiority*.

FINALLY, So far as the Exhortation in the text extends to *Superiors*, it must include in it--- That they be easy of *access*, and behave towards those that are below them with *meekness* and *humanity*; being favourable to their *indiscretions*, ready to relieve their *wants*, and generously disposed to consult and act for their *welfare*: Be-

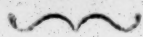
cause *all* Mankind belong to *one* class of Beings, though Providence, for wise reasons, has made a *Distinction* between them in the *Offices* of Life ; and because a *superior Genius*, and a *superior Virtue*, may be concealed under low and despised Circumstances, which, perhaps, would make a distinguished figure, and create admiration, if they were brought out of *obscurity*.

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--- How *insignificant* soever we may think some of our Fellow-Creatures to be in respect of ourselves, it is very probable that we make a much *lower* figure in *the Universe*, if compared with innumerable other intelligent Beings, who were *originally* form'd in a more *exalted order*. And let us ask ourselves calmly, in order to kill the seeds of *Pride* and *Imperious Conduct*, whether it be fit that we should sacrifice the indisputable *Rights* of Mankind, resulting from their *natural Equality*, to *accidental* and *precarious Advantages*, that have no real *merit* in them? And whether we cannot maintain all the necessary *decorums* of Life, and the *Deference* due to our particular Characters, without *Stiffness* and *Arrogance*, and a *Scornful* and

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Rigorous Treatment of our inferior Brethren?

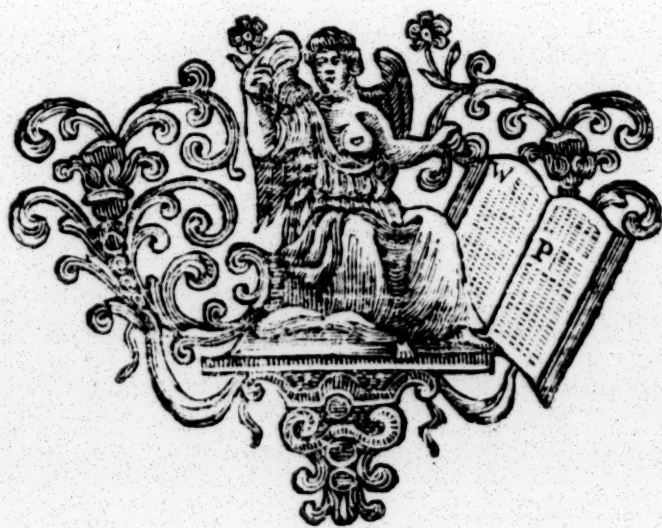
Phil. ii.  
3--8.LET *nothing* then be done *through strife, or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind.*---

*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who though he was in the form of God [or deputed to represent his person and act in his name] did not greedily covet the continuance of this high honour; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The most exalted among Men, be they ever so eminently distinguished by their Rank and Power, are such worthless, such diminutive Creatures, when compared with the image, or representative, of the invisible God, with that glorious Being by whom all things were created; that the example of his Divine condescension must, if they are Christians, and have any regard to decency of Character, shame them out of their*

Col. i.  
15, 16.

their haughtiness and insolence. But to what extreme contempt and infamy does it expose the pride and oppression of *lesser Tyrants*, in the *common* Stations of Life? In *these*, a stern, supercilious, and disdainful carriage is an *awkward* and *unnatural* vice; and in *all*, I have already shewn it to be as unsuitable to *Human Nature* and the *Reason* of things, as it is inconsistent with the *Christian* temper.

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## S E R M O N IX.



The Glory of God best promoted  
by the moral rectitude and hap-  
piness of his Creatures.

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I COR. X. 31.

*Whether therefore ye eat or drink,  
or whatsoever ye do, do all to the  
glory of God.*

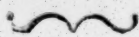


It is an undeniable truth, and indeed a first principle, without which all our Speculations and reasonings about Religion and Morality must be rude and indigested, that every man is obliged to consider his nature and its fa-  
cilities,

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faculties, his situation and character, what *he is in himself*, and what becomes him as *a part of the Universe*, in order to form a right scheme of conduct. These two things are equally to be regarded -- the *importance* and *dignity* of his nature in itself, and the *Relations* he stands in to other Beings.

IF he is abstracted from all consideration of his *Fellow-creatures*, and retires inward, quite excluding the World around him, to raise and cultivate a *contracted* private happiness, his notions of duty and of the proper regulations of his Manners must be very unjust and defective; because he behaves like *what he is not*, and quite forgets what *he is*; and acts as if he had *the whole* of Human Nature in himself, as if he was *single*, *unallied*, and *independent*. On the contrary, if he has so much *Complaisance* for others, and pays such an *undue respect* to their Sollicitations or Example, as to join with them in scenes of Debauchery and Corruption; if he suffers his affectation of *Good-nature*, and desire to be thought *obliging* and *conformable* in Society, to hurry him into wicked excesses which are repugnant to the Law of his Mind, and the immu-

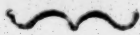


immutable standard and rule of right: In SERM.  
this Case likewise he gives evident proof IX.  
that he does not understand *his own frame*,  
he contradicts the obvious and unquestion-  
able *design of it*, and acts like one who  
has *blind social Instincts* without reason.

THE perverseness of Conduct, the defect of *Moral* character, in both these Instances, is immediately perceived and censured. But there is another instance equally clear, in which it is not so readily allowed; and that respects the first and greatest, the wisest and best, of all Beings, and the *regard* we owe to him. He is the *Life* of the World, the *Spirit*, that animates and governs the immense frame of Nature; to him our *relation* is indisputable, our *obligations* are infinite: We cannot *exclude* him from the *Universe* without destroying it -- and shall we shut him out of our scheme of *Morality*? The relations we stand in to *Men* are acknowledged to be the foundation of *various Offices*, of indispensable necessity, and the utmost importance in Human life; and can it be, that our relation to *God* constitutes *no tie*, *no bond of Duty*? Is it unfit that we should  
act

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act as if we were born only for ourselves, without having any concern for the welfare of our Fellow-creatures; and are we at liberty to live as *without God in the world*? Nothing can be more *absurdly*, more inexcuseably wicked: For it supposes the Universe to be all *Creature*, and no *Creator*; all *Effect*, and no *Cause*.

BESIDES, a sense and humble acknowledgment of *Dependence* must, in the nature of things, be as much a *right* Sense, and a *proper* Acknowledgment, with respect to *God*, as to any other Beings. Sentiments and expressions of *Gratitude* must be at least as justly due to the *infinite universal* Benefactor, as they can be to *inferior* Benefactors; from whom the *kindnesses* we receive are less, but our *claims* greater. So that he can neither be a truly *wise* Man, nor strictly speaking a *moral* Man, who confines the whole of virtue to temperance, justice, and benevolence, and neglects the *rational* duties of Piety. -- For is God the indulgent and tender *Parent* of mankind; and does he deserve no *Reverence*, and filial *Affection*? Is he the *unexhausted Spring of Good*; and not to be  
ador'd

ador'd for his boundless munificence and liberality? Is he our *supreme Governour*, righteous, merciful, and condescending to our Infirmities; but not worthy to have his Authority publicly acknowledged, and to receive universal Homage and Submission? Is he transcendently *amiable*, and in his moral Character the brightest and most consummate Pattern for our Imitation; and are his Excellencies not fit to be celebrated, to be contemplated with wonder and delight, to be studied, and carefully transplanted into our own Minds, and display'd to the view of others? Can we refuse to pay these *natural Honours* where they are so justly and eminently due; and to him, whose unmerited bounty has supply'd our *past Pleasures*, from whom we derive the *present Good*, and must expect all that is *to come*. -- All this is most shameful *impropriety* and *indecentcy* of Conduct, even to common sense. And the Conclusion from the whole stands thus -- That as he is a good *Man*, who acts up to the law of his Nature, and supports its true Honour --- As he among us is a good *Member of Society*, who is sincerely concern'd for the Honour

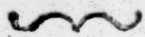
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Honour of his Prince and Country, --- So, by an exact parity of reasoning, those rational Beings, only, are good *Subjects* of the universal King and Lord of the Creation, whose ultimate view it is to promote his *Glory*, and the design of his moral Government.

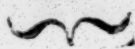
BUT can the *Glory* of the Almighty God be in reality advanced, and render'd more resplendent, by such diminutive Creatures as we are! Can the eternal Majesty of Heaven receive an *accession* of Greatness, or depend in the least, for the *Support* of his Sovereign Honours, on our Follies and Imperfections! Far be it from us to indulge a thought so vain and arrogant with respect to ourselves, and so injurious and degrading to our Maker. His *Glory* is in truth nothing else but the *Premminence*, and *unrivall'd Dignity*, that results from his supreme Dominion, and from his infinite Perfections manifested in the Constitution of Nature, and the Preservation and Government of the Universe. And from hence it follows, that it is *essential*, and *immutable*, and must always shine with an undiminished unfading Lustre.

All

All that we can do is *to cultivate a strong sense of it, and impress it upon our own minds as an habitual principle of humble Adoration and Reverence of the Deity; and represent it to our Fellow-Creatures in a just and engaging light.* This is the general sense of the advice given in the text, and a sense, that expressions of the like import frequently bear in the holy Scriptures. I shall quote a few passages out of many others which might be produced. Thus we are told, that *all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and in him amen, unto the Glory of God; i. e. to the manifestation of his mercy and faithfulness.* 2 Cor. i. 20. Again, when Jesus heard of the sickness of Lazarus, he said, *This sickness is not unto death, but for the Glory of God.* [the Discovery of his Power and Goodness] John xi. 4. *that the Son of God might be glorified thereby, --- or acknowledged and submitted to as the true Messiah.* In like manner, Abraham is said *not to have staggered at the promise of God through unbelief, but to have been strong in faith, giving Glory to God, i. e. declaring his firm belief of God's Veracity, and Ability to perform his most difficult*

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 IX. to *glorify God* signifies, in many passages  
 of Scripture, no more than to *praise* him,  
 and *proclaim* his Excellencies. This sense  
 is asserted in express terms in the following  
 Ver. 23. sentence of the 50th Psalm,---*Whoso offer-  
 eth praise glorifieth me.* And to the same  
 purpose are the words of St. Luke, *And  
 Luke ii. suddenly there was with the Angel a mul-  
 '3, 14. titude of the heavenly Host praising God,  
 and saying, Glory to God in the highest.*  
 — The method which I intend to pursue  
 in the remaining part of this discourse is,

FIRST, To explain more particularly  
 the duty, which St. *Paul* has recommend-  
 ed, of *doing all things to the Glory of God*:  
 And then

To point out, SECONDLY, some false  
 notions relating to the *Glory* of God, and  
 the *proper ways* of promoting it; which,  
 I apprehend, will be found in reality to  
 fully and eclipse his honour, and to have  
 been of vast disservice to Religion.

THE FIRST thing proposed is to ex-  
 plain more particularly the Duty, which  
 St. *Paul* has recommended, of doing *all*  
 things



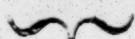
things to the Glory of God. And in order to understand it aright, it is absolutely necessary that our *foundation* be good: I shall therefore begin with observing, that the *Glory* of God must consist chiefly in his *moral* Excellencies. Eternity, and Immensity, irresistible Power, and unbounded Dominion, are, it must be allowed, *grand* ideas, and form a most *elevated* and *awful* Character. But the *Glory* results *only* from hence, that it is a Character of eternal and immense *Goodness*, a Power conducted by *Wisdom*, a Dominion of *Righteousness*, *Grace*, and *Clemency*. Without these more mild and amiable Attributes, we have a view of nothing but prodigious *Deformity*, and stupendous *Ruin*. For an eternal and infinite Principle, that is capricious, unjust, and cruel, can only forebode *Confusion* and *Misery* to the Creation, and must excite the strongest aversion and terror. So that if by our false speculations we divest the Deity of his *Equity* and *Mercy*, we destroy all his title to Veneration and Honour; and our Detestation and Dread of him must increase, in proportion as his *Power* is more absolute, and his *Dominion* more extensive  
and

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and unlimited. From whence it follows, that we cannot in an exact and proper manner display the *Glory* of the Divine Character, unless we have carefully studied what is the most *worthy* and *adorable* part of it; nor can we disparage the Deity so much by confused apprehensions, and little childish Conjectures, about his *abstract Nature* and *Essence* (where the most Philosophical inquires have only served to demonstrate the *weakness*, and at the same time the *presumption*, of Human reason) as by errors relating to his *moral Perfections*. It is now natural to examine, by what methods the *Glory* of God, in the sense in which it has been above explained, will be most effectually promoted. And

FIRST, One principal way, by which God is *glorified*, is the *Moral Rectitude* of his reasonable Creatures. If we survey the vast Fabrick of the *Material World*, whence is it that it so loudly proclaims the *Glory* of the Eternal Architect? Why by *following* its *primitive* Course, *continuing* to be govern'd by its *original* Establish'd Laws, and *maintaining* the same exquisite Structure, the same Proportion and Harmony,  
the

the same admirable uses and subserviency to one general end, which it had *in the beginning*. *The Heavens* for instance (of which the *Psalmist* expressly speaks) *declare the Glory* of their Former only for this reason, because they shew what is *REALLY his* handy-work; and preserve that beauty, that magnificence and splendour, and those beneficial influences, which were the contrivance of his infinite Wisdom, and the effect of his wonderful Operation. But if *inanimate Nature* was defaced and perverted, and the several parts of it were jumbled together in a wild confusion, though there might still appear through its *ruins* some faint glimmerings of the Creator's *Glory*, yet it could not shine, as it now does, with a *clear and strong* light. *Nature*, in such a state of *Disorder*, would seem to be an *unfinished* piece at best; it would look only like a *sketch* of some great and noble design not brought to *perfection*; and be depriv'd of those lively signatures of inimitable *Skill*, those marks of supreme and unlimited *Goodness*, which distinguish and adorn all the *genuine* works of Heaven.

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PS. xiv. 1.



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AND as it is in the *Natural World*, it holds exactly the same in the *Moral*. God is never more *glorified*, or, in other words, the *excellencies* of his nature are never more eminently and honourably *illustrated*, than by the *perfection* of his Intelligent creatures: Because then the *master-piece* of all his works appears in its *right order*, and corresponds with the *idea* and *model* of it in the Divine mind; and it must consequently demonstrate, with more convincing and unexceptionable evidence, both the *wise design* of its Author to excite our admiration, and his vast essential *goodness* to raise our love and gratitude.----This may be laid down as a good *general rule*, which reason cannot dispute---that as it tends more to the *credit* of any *Artificer*, or, in other words, to discover the *curiosities* and real *beauties* of his *art*, to have his work in the *order* in which he intended it should be, and completely adapted to its peculiar *Use*, than to have it *impair'd* and *maim'd*, which may raise a doubt about his own *skill*, as well as about the *value* of the work itself: So the *perfections* of God display themselves more *illustriously* in all the parts of his creation,

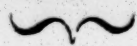
ation, and strike the mind more forcibly, when his works are *fair*, and in their *original rectitude*, than when they are *deform'd* and *monstrous*. And besides they give less occasion to *sceptical* minds, inclin'd either from ignorance, or presumption, or corruption of heart, to cavil; they give to such, I say, less occasion to blaspheme the *Author* of nature, and insult his honour.

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AND as the *honour* of the *Creator* is represented in the brightest view in the *Regularity* and *Beauty* of his works; so the highest external and visible *glory* of God, considered as a *Governour*, arises from the *submission*, and *obedience* of his subjects. For they declare by this *conduct*, that they think his *laws* equitable, and his *rewards* munificent and generous; and, by a cheerful discharge of their duty, they give the world a proof, that they conceive of his *authority* not as a usurpation, but as a natural and rightful tie, and of his *government* as founded in justice, and exercis'd and supported by lenity and mercy. Whereas all those, who refuse to conform to the eternal law and rule of right, openly affront and oppose the supreme Ruler of heaven and

P a earth,

*The glory of God promoted by the*  
earth, and do all that is in their power to  
render him *mean* and *contemptible*.



SECONDLY, We are instrumental in advancing the *glory* of God, in proportion as we advance the *Happiness* of the rational and moral World. For the *End* of the Creator, in giving being, was to communicate *Happiness*; and if he had originally intended, and absolutely determin'd, that his reasonable creatures should be *misérable* upon the whole, this must have destroyed the foundation of that esteem, and of those elevated conceptions of him, which the wise and good have ever entertain'd. And if the *design* to communicate happiness was sublime and generous in itself, and upon that account highly *honourable* to the Deity, it necessarily follows, that his *Glory* must shine with a conspicuous lustre in the *success* of it.

FROM what has been said it appears, that the whole substance of the duty recommended in the text may be reduc'd to this—  
“ That we honour God, obey his laws,  
“ and be examples of strict and universal  
“ virtue *ourselves*; and endeavour to *propagate*  
“ a right knowledge of him, a just idea  
“ of



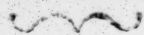
“ of his providence, a devout and reverent esteem of his excellencies, and an ardent desire to imitate them.” If we take care, in the *general* course of our actions, to do nothing *inconsistent* with this; if it be our *fix'd* and *ultimate aim*, and the *principle* that regulates and directs our conduct; we fully comply with the Apostle's exhortation, and may be properly said, *whatsoever we do, to do it to the Glory of God.* I now proceed,

IN the SECOND place, to point out briefly some *false* notions relating to the *Glory* of God, and the *Methods* of promoting it, which, I apprehend, will be found in reality to stain and eclipse his Honour, and to have been of vast disservice to Religion.

AND the FIRST error, which is directly suggested by the foregoing Discourse, is this, the making the *Glory* of God an End *distinct* from the *Perfection* and *Happiness* of Mankind; whereas they ought to be consider'd as *intimately* and *inseparably* united. For to advance *truth* and *righteousness* is the end that the *Creator* had in view, and to which he has adapt-

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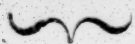


ed the constitution and faculties of Human Nature: This is likewise the ultimate design of his *Laws* and *Government*. And can we do him greater *Honour* than by answering the purposes both of *Nature*, and *Providence*? It has been already observ'd, that to suppose that he himself intended, that his reasonable creatures should be *vitious* and *miserable*, is the most odious reflection that can possibly be thrown on his *Purity* and *Goodness*: We cannot therefore so effectually exalt the *Glory* of both these Attributes, as by a regular pursuit of *Virtue* and *Happiness*.

AGAIN, the bulk of the world are too apt to form their notions of God from what they *feel* in themselves; from their own *passions*, and *prejudices*, and *mistaken ideas* of perfection: And whatever it be, that, for its grandeur or excellence, is the chief object of their admiration, they think they do him *Honour* by making it a part of his character. Thus, for example, if any are naturally imperious, and eagerly desirous of popularity; if they treat their inferiors and dependents like slaves, and expect to have their favour  
pur-

purchas'd by cringing and flattery; such Persons as these, misled and blinded by their passions, will be apt to imagine, that the great God likewise is highly honour'd by *magnificent Temples, suppliant postures, fawning submissions, and a servile dread* of his Omnipotence: Whereas, in truth, by representing him as being pleas'd with a useless *exterior pomp*, and with those monuments of *Pride and Tyranny* which can only pass, among the inconsiderate or the vain, for marks of just and substantial *Glory* -- They disparage and reproach his *Wisdom*, and ascribe to him what is a *Weakness* and a *Blemish* even in the Human Nature. --- There are several other very gross and dangerous errors, that have sprung from the same source: Of which I shall only add one more instance. Whoever has made just observations on Mankind must be convinced, that the majority, in all degrees of life, are fond of *Power*, of *arbitrary Rule*; and exercise the measure of power, which they are possess'd of, with *severity and rigour*. And from hence we are enabled to give a *natural* account, why the *Glory of God*, his chief





*The glory of God promoted by the*

and supreme Glory, has been made to consist in *Dominion*, and *Sovereignty*; and why his actions have been exempted from those general rules of *Equity* and *Goodness*, which are an eternal standard of right conduct to all intelligent Beings without *exception*. But to shew that this cannot be a point of *true Glory*, it will be sufficient for me to remark, that if the Rules above-mentioned are not strictly and invariably adher'd to, to be a *Sovereign* can possibly signify nothing else, -- than to be a *Tyrant*.

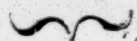
ANOTHER way, which some have thought necessary to advance the *Glory* of the Deity is, to represent the *Nature* of Man as totally *depraved and enfeebled*; and to ascribe the whole of his *Conversion* from a course of vice (which is perversely stiled his *Natural* state) and of his *progress* in true Religion and Virtue, to a *Divine* uncontrollable influence---But by this Scheme the *freedom* and *morality* of Human actions are destroy'd; the *sins* of the most obstinate and harden'd offenders (who are unable of themselves to correct their errors, and are deny'd the necessary *Supernatural* assist-

assistance) are excused; the *Piety* of good men loses all its hope of a *Reward*; the *general exhortations* of the Gospel to repent, and turn from our evil ways, and its *promises* and *threatnings*, proposed as *Motives* to such a reformation, are render'd impertinent and trifling; and with all these harsh consequences, even the *Grace* of God is not more exalted and glorified, than it is by the contrary scheme. For, surely, it must redound *as much* to the *honour* of his *Goodness*, if the important business of Religion be perform'd by the strength of *natural* faculties, which we originally *deriv'd* from him; as it can do to suppose, that all Mankind are blind unactive *Machines*, determin'd and *constrain'd* to be Religious by his *immediate* and *irresistible* impulse.

IT has been thought by others, that it gives a most *glorious* idea of the Divine *Omnipotence*, to extend it to plain and direct *Contradictions* --- Whereas whatever implies a Contradiction is not capable of a *real existence*, and consequently cannot be the *subject* of *Power*: And it is neither an affront to *Omnipotence* to assert, that it

S E R M.

IX.



SERM. is not able to effect what is *impossible* to be  
 IX. done --- nor a diminution of *perfect Knowledge*, that it does not comprehend what is  
 ~~~~~ *impossible* to be known.

IT would be tedious to enumerate all the absurd opinions that properly belong to this head, and therefore I shall mention but one instance more; than which nothing shews more strongly the prodigious *depravity* of sentiment, that may prevail among Mankind. What I intend is this, ---- That it has been judged to be a proper way of promoting the Glory of God, to *rack* and *torture* Conscience, and maintain the cause of Religion by *Violence* and *Persecution*. This may be --- the glory of a *Tyrant* --- the glory of a blood-thirsty *Inquisitor* --- the glory of that *malignant Spirit*, who is stiled the *Tempter* and *Accuser* of the Brethren. --- But to imagine, that a Being of eternal Justice and Mercy can suffer his Authority to be so infamously *prostituted*, as to give a sanction to Cruelty and Oppression, is rather a worse reproach to him than to *deny* his existence: For it is surely
 better

better *not to be*, than to be a *Monster*; SERM.
dreaded and detested by all. IX

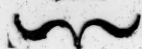
LET us, my Brethren, learn, avoiding those gross errors into which others have unhappily fallen, to *give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name*, and let us *worship him in the beauty of holiness*. Let us take care, that neither by absurd Principles, nor by an irregular behaviour, we disgrace *Religion*, and bring dishonourable reflections on the *Author* of it. Let us seriously endeavour, in our several Stations, and according to our respective Abilities, to advance the *Kingdom of God* among Men; the *Kingdom of Peace, Benevolence, and Purity*, the *Empire of Reason over Appetite*, of *Truth over Ignorance and Error*. Thus shall we have *one View*, and be animated by the same *Spirit*, with the most exalted of our Species, the Saints in Heaven; who are represented as adoring God, and thus expressing their Devotion: *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power: For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.* — May the God of Nature be universally acknowledged and cele-

Rev. iv

11.

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celebrated, and the Religion of *Nature* rightly understood ; and for the more perfect Salvation of Mankind from Darkness and Superstition, and the Slavery of Vice, may *Christianity* spread its *Light* and *reforming* Influences throughout the World: *That at the name of Jesus every knee may bow, and every tongue confess him to be Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.*



SER-



S E R M O N X.

*****!*****!*****!*****!

The folly of imitating popular
and fashionable vices.

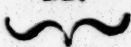
Ex o d. xxiii. 2.

*Thou shalt not follow a multitude
to do evil.*



THE Infinite Creator hath
planted, in all Mankind, a
strong inclination to *Society*.
He hath also endued them
with *social* Principles, with
affections of *Benevolence* and *Compassion*,
to sweeten and improve Human Life,
and

S E R M.
X.



SERM. and excite to a constant intercourse of
 X. good Offices. And for this we are highly
 indebted to the wise Contriver and Author
 of the Human frame; thus far all is *beautiful*, and calculated to serve most *valuable* Purposes. But the unhappiness lies here, that the *natural* inclination to *Society* is too commonly perverted and abused --- It begets, first, a general Similitude of *Opinions* and *Manners*, and, by degrees, a Conformity to *vicious* Customs and Manners: And thus it becomes the Instrument of *degrading* and *corrupting* our Nature, which it was designed to elevate and refine. And as this is an error of so *fatal* a tendency, there was good reason for that particular Caution against it which we find in the text, --- *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*. In the following Discourse I propose to consider,

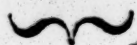
IN the FIRST place, the great Danger that there is, when Vice is *prevailing* and *popular*, that Men will fall in with the common Degeneracy.

SECONDLY.

SECONDLY, I shall shew the inexcusable *Folly* of this conduct, and that there can be no plausible Pretence either of *Reason* or *Interest*, for imitating the *sinful Customs* of the Age in which we live. On the contrary, I shall endeavour to prove,

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THIRDLY, That we are under the strongest Obligations to be *singularly* and *inflexibly* virtuous, in times of *universal Depravity*; and demonstrate the peculiar *Honour* and *Excellency* of such a Character.

FIRST, I am to consider the great Danger that there is, when Vice is *prevailing* and *popular*, that Men will fall in with the common Degeneracy. This is evidently implied in the text; which necessarily supposes, as the *foundation* of the Command or Exhortation therein given, that the generality are too apt to *conform* to the genius and manners of those with whom they converse, and to be carry'd away by the stream into all *fashionable* excesses. And the causes of it are not *constitutional*, neither are they the peculiarities of *Air* and *Climate*, or an unhappy
pliable

SERM. *pliable* disposition in particular countries;
 X. but having ever been ignorance and prejudice, false shame, weakness of resolution, and strength of passion, their influence is more likely to be *universal*, and much the same in *all ages*; till *serious reflection* becomes more common, and *better principles* of conduct prevail.

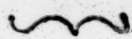
THE force of *Custom* is, itself, prodigious and unaccountable. The bulk of Mankind are quite *enslaved* by it. They have little else to plead for most of their *opinions*, and the usages by which nations are distinguish'd from each other. They imbibe the sentiments, which it recommends, with an implicit awe and veneration. Much more regard is paid to it than to the dictates of *right reason*, which are but little known; and where they might be better understood, are seldom consulted. The most ridiculous notions and practices, that can plead *antient prescription*, and *publick countenance*, have frequently a respect paid to them, and are treated with tenderness, even by persons of *higher Character and Discernment*; but they are almost idoliz'd by the *Vulgar*, and
 propa-

propagated with surprizing zeal and vehemence. Nay it is custom, that has fram'd and establish'd, in a great measure, the several *Religions* in the World. -- It is no wonder then, since Men appear to be so indolent, and inclined to submit to and follow the *publick leading* implicitly, that *Custom* is apprehended to give a sort of sanction to *vice* itself; and hinders them from discerning, in a clear and strong light, its native *baseness* and *deformity*.

WE may add to this, that even *flagrant* corruptions and instances of licentious behaviour, when they are *general*, of consequence grow more *familiar*, and do not raise so *sensible* a disgust and aversion, as they would do if they were more *unusual*; unless the Mind be habitually and powerfully impress'd by sentiments of Virtue and Religion. Our sense of things in the *moral* World is very much the same, as it is with respect to the *natural*. If *Prodigies*, and *irregular* appearances in Nature, were more *common*, we should converse with them with much less astonishment and reluctance. So likewise examples of *Wickedness* strike with less hor-

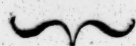
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X.



ror when they are *abounding*, and appear in every station of Life, than they would do in an innocent and regular age, in which they were *rare* and *unfrequent*. Nay, in such a state of Corruption as this, Men who are inclined to the same kind of irregular practices, will easily persuade themselves, that what is so *universal* cannot be in any *high* degree *Criminal*; that the approbation and choice of the *Majority* is a strong presumption in its favour; a presumption at least, that there is more of *prejudice* than argument against it; and that the restraints laid on the Passions, and the Notions so rigidly inculcated concerning the difference between Good and Evil, were invented by the subtilty and craft of Politicians and Priests, and are supported by Enthusiasm.— And when persons are gone thus far, the *transition* is natural and direct to all manner of lewdness and impurity.

SEVERAL other Considerations may be suggested, to shew the eminent danger that there is, when Vice is *prevailing* and *popular*, that will spread like an *Infection*, and become more and more *epidemical*.—

lc.

In this unhappy circumstance, *Opportunities* for the practice of it must of course be more common, and *Temptations* to it more violent and engaging; *opportunities* more *convenient* for those who are already corrupted, and *temptations* more likely to *surprise* and *ensnare* the innocent. -- It will be insinuated to the loose imagination, that has entertain'd itself with a prospect of high delight from vicious Indulgences, and is thereby become *susceptible* of stronger ill impressions -- that the *Malignity* and *Guilt* of evil actions is lessen'd by its being *divided*, and spread among a *Multitude*: As if instead of being, *each*, an intelligent moral accountable agent, the *whole corrupt mass* of Mankind was to be considered as *one individual*, of which every distinct offender is only a *part*. It will be suggested farther -- that the *infamy* of an immoral course is in a great degree avoided by its being *universal*; because as larger numbers are sharers in the reproach, less of it will of consequence be fixed on *particular characters* -- that, on the contrary, the main *Scandal* lies on the side of

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Virtue, which ought to be relinquish'd to escape the opprobrious stain of a narrow education, unfashionable stiffness of behaviour, a sullen gloomy reserve, and the like -- and that flattering, and bearing *a part* in, the Vices of the *Great* tends to procure their countenance and protection, and may be attended with considerable advantages.

FINALLY, As a wicked Life can only be supported by *false* principles, and one *false* principle prepares the way for a train of absurd reasoning--- Some may be so extravagant in their presumptions as to imagine, that though the supreme Governour of the World, to prevent the Contagion from spreading farther, might punish immorality if there were only a *few* instances of it ; yet he is too merciful to treat it with this severity when it is *become general*, because such a method of proceeding must make *so great a part* of his rational Creatures *miserable*, whose *happiness* was the end of their Formation. I have chose to point out minutely the several ways of imposing upon themselves, by which men may be brought to join in
publick

publick Vices, because these are the source from whence all their Danger springs: And they do indeed directly tend to a total depravation of *Principles* and *Conduēt*. I now proceed to shew,

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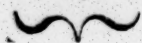
SECONDLY, The inexcusable *Folly* of imitating the *sinful customs* of the age in which we live-- And, FIRST, The very foundation, which such *mean-spirited Sinners* set out upon, is extremely wrong, *viz.* the opinion of the *Multitude*, which is one of the most erroneous, inconsistent, and variable Rules we can possibly proceed by. Upon this foundation, it was hardly ever known, that a rational superstructure could be fram'd either in *Speculation* or *Practice*, either in *Religion* or *civil Life*. For of the generality of Mankind it may be truly said, that *confused* and *unconnected* notions pick'd up by chance, and rivetted in them by prepossession and a resolute inattention to better evidence, are in general, and besides mere *animal* perceptions, the sum of their knowledge; and that these blind *Prejudices*,

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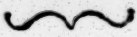
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with a mixture of strong *Passions*, are the governing principles of their actions.

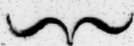
I WILL not dispute, but they are endued by the great Creator with *natural* capacities, fitted for acquiring more solid and extensive knowledge; and, perhaps in some instances, for making *equal* improvements, if they had a suitable education and proper advantages, with many who are now *distinguish'd* (because they go in a track wherein they are but *seldom* follow'd) for *superior* abilities. But what appears to be the *real state* of things in our own times; or, as far as we have the light of history to direct us, in all former ages?---The matter of fact is undeniable, that the *multitude* have ever been persons of very scanty and superficial reflection, indebted almost entirely to the God of *Nature* and *Grace*, for the *little Knowledge* they have had of Religion and Morality; of which they would scarce have retained *any idea at all*, if the principles of both had not been *originally* impress'd upon their minds, and afterwards *reviv'd* by an extraordinary Revelation. And what the light of Revelation has *restor'd*, in those nations which  
are



are favour'd with it, instead of *increasing*, they have rather *obliterated* and *extinguish'd* by their indolence and sensuality.--If there-  
S E R M.  
X.  


fore we set up the *general opinion* as the measure of *truth*, or the *general practice* as the standard of *right*, we are likely to lose both our Knowledge and Morality, and to have little else in the place of them but ignorance and superstition. And it has held true in almost every age, that none ever *reasoned* justly---who did not depart from the sentiments of the *vulgar* in many things, and oppose their prejudices; nor *acted* a wise and honourable part, becoming the dignity of their nature, and the obligations of Virtue and rational Religion---so far as they were led by the predominant taste and byass of the *Times*: Nay farther, one of the surest ways that could be taken both to think and act wrong has been, implicitly to follow their *guidance*, the extravagance of their principles, and the licentiousness of their behaviour. And how indeed can it be expected to be otherwise at any time, if we resign ourselves to the *direction* of those who seldom think; and whose opinions are so accidental, un-

SERM. fix'd, and mutable, that it is impossible to  
 X. reduce them to a *consistent* scheme.

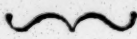


BUT perhaps it will be said by such that are involv'd in *publick* vices, and who follow the loose manners of the age, that indeed they look upon the bulk of Mankind as hardly capable of judging for themselves, and consequently, as very unfit to frame *opinions* and prescribe *Rules* for others, and therefore think it a disgrace to them to have it imagin'd, that they submit to their *judgment*, or regard their *example*.---No, The persons whom they allow to *lead* are such only, as are of distinguish'd characters; who, by virtue of their high rank and liberal education, must have acquired *extensive* views, and a more *refin'd* sense of things; and are therefore the best judges of true worth, elegance and decency of behaviour, and best able to determine and regulate the *publick conduct*.--But how does it appear, that even *these* are qualify'd to be our *guides*, to whose *decision* we may honourably submit, and safely follow the *customs* which they introduce?---Besides the *variety* and *inconsistency* of their principles and pursuits, not only in different ages and in parts of  
 the

the World far remote from each other, but in the *same* age and country; besides this, I say, which evidently demonstrates, that their sentiments and manners are no *fit* rule to govern ourselves by, any more than those of the *mere vulgar*; besides that this *same variety* and *inconsistency* proves that they are *erroneous* guides, since it is impossible for truth to *contradict* itself --- What ground have we to imagine, that *these* are the persons most likely to *find out* truth, and to *judge* with the greatest exactness and impartiality concerning the principles of Virtue and Religion? Educated, as it may fairly be presum'd they often are, without that *strict discipline*, which is necessary to teach the true government of the passions, surrounded with *Pomp* and *Luxury*, and engaged in a continual round of *Vanity* and *Pleasure*, which dazzle the understanding, and divert the *attention* from subjects of higher importance? -- Where *thoughtlessness* and *levity* of temper very much abound, where the spirits are *gay*, and the appetites *inflam'd*, where frequent *incentives* to excess present themselves, the *examples* of it are numerous, and the *restraints* from it few and in-

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considerable ; it may with the utmost modesty and decency be affirm'd, that we have very little ground to expect either much justness of *sentiment* about the right conduct of life, or such a rational and well-order'd *behaviour*, as deserves our *imitation*.

I SHALL add but one thing more to shew the great absurdity of copying after the example of the *Multitude*, whether in *high* or *low* stations, and that is, that while their *practice* is on the side of Vice, their *judgment* and *sober reflections* are commonly in favour of Virtue. This proves, indeed, not only that they are *unsafe* guides, but such as no Man can follow ; because he cannot *imitate* without, at the same time, *opposing* them. And which shall we be sway'd and influenced by, their *reason*, or the *licentiousness* of their behaviour ? If by their *reason*, we can pay no regard to their *example* ; and if we follow their *evil example* against *reason*, we must condemn ourselves.

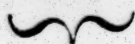
LET us suppose however, that the Multitude are not only more *capable* of judging truly, but more likely to be *actually* in the right, than *experience* teaches us they are,

are, the *folly* of joining in their evil practices will still continue to be as great as ever; because the most *prevailing*, nay, the *universal* opinion of Mankind cannot set aside the immutable difference of Good and Evil. The *infamy* therefore of a course of sin in *each particular instance*, must be exactly the *same in itself* and to the view of *reason*, be it ever so *common*, as it would be if there was but *one* single example of it: Though as there are *many objects* to divide our *attention*, it may not appear *publickly* in so strong and glaring a light. Nor can the *evil consequences* of vice be, upon the whole, *diminish'd*, by its being widely diffus'd and communicated. For it is self-evident, that the *natural* ill effects, which spring *directly* from it as a tree from its root, cannot be *prevented*, without *altering* the establish'd constitution and scheme of things. And there can be no reason to suppose, that the righteous judge of Mankind will shew the *least favour* to prevailing and general wickedness, because of the *Multitude* of sinners that are to be *punish'd*: Since nothing can be more absurd than to imagine, that the very *number*



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*ber* of the offenders, which calls most loudly for the interposition of *justice* to give an effectual check to the *insolence* and *triumphs* of Vice, should be the ground of their *impunity*; to the entire subversion of all *order* in the moral World, and laying in Mens way an irresistible temptation, for their own *security*, to *seduce* and *debauch* each other.

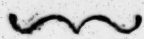
BUT I believe, after all, that the true motive which induces so many to share in *popular* and *fashionable* Vices is not, that they have a *real esteem* of the *generality* in either of the characters above-mentioned, or any *Reverence* for their opinions and customs; but chiefly that they may avoid their *censures*. They frequently express the utmost *Contempt* of the *Multitude*, while they imitate their extravagancies; but the fear of *reproach*, and a view to *private interest*, over-ruling the *judgment* of their Minds, and being too strong for their sense of *generosity*, prevail with them to follow the manners of *those* whom they *despise*.----But what is the shame of *unpoliteness*, which is only *imaginary*, to the foul dishonour of having debased my rational



tional faculties, and eclips'd their native excellence? What are the Reproaches of the inconsiderate, ill-judging, giddy *Multitude*, or the scoffs and derisions of sinners of *any rank* who are lost to virtue and ingenuity of mind, to the sharp rebukes of an awaken'd *conscience* causing confusion and tumult within us; to the displeasure of *Almighty God*, whose awful judgment will absolutely determine our happiness or misery; and to the contempt of all the *rational* and *jobber* Beings in the Universe? Or what are the little precarious *advantages*, that may arise from vicious compliances, that they should be thought sufficient to compensate for the loss of *immortal happiness*, and the future *terrors* and *miseries* of guilt?---A Man may easily bear up under *undeserved* infamy, who has reason to be satisfy'd with himself, and approves of his conduct as worthy and honourable; but if he is vile and despicable in *his own eyes*, worldly glory will lose its lustre, and the applauses of his wicked associates must be harsh and ungrateful. Again, when he is sure of the *favour* of the Maker and Governor of the World, he may support himself

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self by the prospect of an ample *reward* hereafter, under all the temporary *inconveniences* to which he may be expos'd by his integrity. But if in the most flourishing circumstances his mind be restless and full of anxiety, tortur'd by remorse on the account of past irregularities, and by dismal apprehensions of future vengeance, he is then *truly* and *substantially* miserable; and can have nothing to afford him any relief but this poor *comfortless* reflection---that he was not *singular* in his Vices; and, therefore, as he had *shareers* in his guilt, he shall also have *companions* in his punishment.

THERE is one thing more, which exceedingly aggravates the crime mentioned in the text, and that is, that it is not only the height of *folly*, but the grossest *impiety*--For no more heinous affront and indignity can be offer'd to the great God, than to subject his eternal and immutable laws of Righteousness to the *wanton caprice*, and *extravagant conduct* of Mankind. Thus to treat his sovereign power, and the wisdom and justice of his Government, with *scorn* and *ignominy*; and the rules of Virtue as of *arbitrary* institution,

tution, enjoin'd indeed by the supreme Majesty of Heaven, but only to be observ'd when they suit with *Human follies*, and do not oppose the *prejudices* and *customs* of a *degenerate World*; this is a crime so complicated, and absolutely inexcusable, as justly demands the severest tokens of the Divine displeasure. Nothing now remains but to shew,

IN the THIRD place, the obligations we are under to be *singularly and inflexibly* virtuous in times of *general* corruption and depravity; together with the peculiar *Honour* and *Excellency* of such a character. I shall begin with the last of these. -- It shews a *nobleness* and *greatness* of spirit, to be true to the dictates of reason, constant and steady to its wise and good resolutions, and to support itself in maintaining the cause of God, the dignity of Human nature, and the interest of all intelligent Beings, amidst the greatest *discouragements* and *difficulties*; despising groundless *Reproaches*, and the *virulence* of malignant tongues, and with calmness and serenity discharging its duty in the midst of *clamour* and *opposition*. A Man of so

gentle-



SERM. *generous* a temper, whom neither frowns,  
 X. nor flatteries, nor private interest can in-  
 ~~~~~ cline to *mean* condescensions, is not *capable*  
 of the *baseness* of either sacrificing his
friends, or betraying his *country*: He is,
 in short, a character of inestimable value in
society. Whereas it is a certain sign of an
 abject slavish spirit *capable* of any *villany*,
 and which ought to be used with no degree
 of confidence where it is possible that an
 advantage may be made by *abusing* it,
 when a Man, for fear of the Reproaches
 of those who are declared enemies to Vir-
 tue, and the *shame* of their species, con-
 sents to bring upon himself Guilt and real
 Infamy in this World, and eternal ruin in
 the next.

THUS it appears, that as a *singular* Vir-
 tue must of necessity struggle with very
 great and unusual *difficulties*, it is upon
 that account the more *meritorious* and
honourable. It is *this* that raises the dig-
 nity and grandeur of a character, and ad-
 vances good Men into *Heroes*. For as
 the performing great actions, above the
ordinary trials of human courage, consti-
 tutes *heroic valour*; so the standing it out
 against

against a series of difficulties, and being unmov'd by revilings and persecutions, as it shews an *invincible* resolution and strength of mind---is *heroic Virtue*.

S E R M.

X.

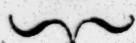
AGAIN, *Examples* of a strict and inflexible Goodness are in an especial manner necessary, in a degenerate age, to check the torrent of Vice, which otherwise may spread itself *wider*, and bear down all before it: They may be a means of *restoring* the *moral World* to its primitive order and rectitude, and are both the ornament and support of *Society*. Our Saviour therefore in the same discourse, in which he calls his Disciples *the light of the World*, gives them this title likewise--*The salt of the earth*; to denote to us, that they were appointed by exemplary Piety, join'd with the influence and efficacy of their doctrine, to preserve mankind from *corruption*.

THE natural reflections, arising from what has been said, are these.

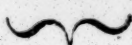
FIRST, That for some of the *same* reasons, for which we ought not to *follow a multitude* to do EVIL, it must be highly ab-

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furd to make them our *Guides* in the choice of our RELIGION: Persons who, considering their inability to judge, are very *unfit* to decide in a controversy of such importance; and who blindly receive whatever Religion is handed down to them by their Forefathers, and are therefore generally sunk into the dregs of *Ignorance* and *Enthusiasm*. Besides, who are the *Multitude*?--Are they *the many* Christians? -- or *the more numerous* Mahometans? or which is by far the *greatest majority* of all--the *Pagan* World? If we exclude both *Heatbens* and *Mahometans* from the right of determining this great affair, and confine the giving judgment in it wholly to *Christians*-- then *Popery* is our Religion, establish'd beyond dispute by the vote and mad zeal of the *Multitude*. Nor will it be of any service to us, if we take the matter entirely from the cognizance of the *common People*, and refer it to *other* judges-- because the *Multitude* of *civil Magistrates* are on the side of *Idolatry*-- and the *Multitude* of *Priests* for *superstition*, and imposing on the Consciences of Mankind. And to collect the greatest
number

number of the most *capable* and *upright* SERM.
Judges, if we are inclined to stand by X.
their arbitration, is absolutely *impossible*. 

Nothing then remains, but that we *choose*
for ourselves after impartial and serious
examination: Which, as it is the way
that God has plainly pointed out to us in
the very composition of our nature; so is
it the only method that is suitable to Be-
ings endued with *Reason*, and *accountable*
for their principles and behaviour.

SECONDLY, Let us beware of an *ex-*
cessive affectation of *Popularity*, which
has a natural tendency to enslave us to
prevailing opinions and customs. To seek
the *just* esteem of our Fellow-creatures
in all *lawful* ways, and, particularly, by
a condescending, gentle, obliging deport-
ment, is doubtless very commendable;
because it will render us more easy and
comfortable in Society, and enlarge our
influence and usefulness. But if we *an-*
xiously pursue this as an *ultimate* point on
which our main happiness depends, we
stand as it were on the edge of a precipice,
and are in imminent danger of sacrificing
our integrity out of a servile complaisance to

SERM. the *humours* of the *Multitude*. Nay I very
 X. much question, whether it be even *possible*
 ~~~~~ for any man to practise all the necessary  
 arts of *popularity* with perfect exactness,  
 and yet preserve his *Innocence*.-- But surely  
 it can't be worth our while, for such a  
*trifle*, to forfeit this inestimable treasure,  
 which is our chief honour and security.  
 For the esteem of the *Multitude* generally  
 springs from *base* and *mercenary* views; it  
 is not the effect of *Judgment*, but of *Passion*  
 and *Interest*; their *Favour* and *Preju-*  
*dice* are alike variable; and if we look  
 above the Vulgar, Men of *high degree*  
 are *Vanity*, as Men of *low degree* are a *lie*:  
 Should we therefore depend on either as  
 the spring of our happiness, we may, by  
 means of innumerable accidents besides  
 fickleness and mutability of temper, be  
*disappointed* in all our expectations. But if,  
 instead of courting with too much earnest-  
 ness and assiduity *fame* and *applause* from  
 Men, we are principally solicitous to se-  
 cure *that honour* which cometh *from God*  
 only, our prospects are built on a sure and  
 immoveable foundation.

To

To conclude ; We may learn, from SERM.  
X.  
this discourse, how to distinguish rightly between a *just* and *laudable*, and an *improper* and *criminal singularity*. And what follows is the true state of the case---That to be *singular* in *Vice* is the utmost point, which we can imagine, of impiety and hardness of heart.---To be *singular* in *trifles* is either childish affectation, or oddness of humour, or stiff conceited obstinacy--But to venture to stand up, as it were *alone*, for the *laws* of God, and the *rectitude* of his rational works, and rescue *Human nature*, our *country*, and the *age* we live in, from the foul shame of being universally stain'd with Vice and Dishonour ; this certainly argues the greatest purity and strength of reason, the most complete command of Appetite and Passion, sedateness of thought, a generosity above temptations to meanness, a resolution not to be subdu'd or intimidated, and, in short, every ingredient that is necessary to form a perfectly *amiable* and *worthy* character---Let this then be our deliberate and unalterable *choice*.







## S E R M O N XI.



The sublimity and extent of Christian Morals.

---

PHILLIPP. iv. 8.

*Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*



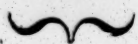
THE whole of moral duty results from *one* principle, and that is, the natural and unchangeable difference of things.

This is the only reason, which we can have, for making a distinction

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between *necessary* and *arbitrary* laws; that the *first* enjoin certain actions which are *fit in themselves*; whereas the *latter* derive all their force from the *mere authority* and *will* of a Superior, and are annul'd, or alter'd, *at pleasure*. ---- But it would be endless to lay down *particular* rules of morality, directly referr'd to every *possible* case that may happen in Human life; since the cases themselves are almost *infinite*, and continually *varying* in some circumstance or other: And this must require such innumerable *variations* in the Rules likewise, as would rather confound than assist the bulk of Mankind. All therefore that can be expected in the most *improved* and *complete* moral System is this, that to supply the place of this *vast multiplicity* of distinct and minute directions, there be certain *general characters* describing the proper behaviour and duty of Men; and that these Characters have a *clear* and *determinate* meaning; and are *easy* to be apply'd to *particular* cases by a common capacity, render'd attentive, and preserv'd from criminal byasses, by an honest and impartial

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dispo-

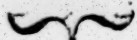


disposition. And, taken thus, the words of St. *Paul* in the text will be found to be eminently useful. They not only *suppose* the unalterable difference of Good and Evil, and give us a noble and perfect summary of the whole of Virtue and moral Goodness; but the *Marks* therein propos'd, to enable us to judge rightly in all circumstances, are *obvious* and *infallible*.---  
*Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these things.* The method of treating this subject, which I think will render it most instructive and profitable, is digested under the following heads.

FIRST, I shall shew, that every one of these branches, *whatever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report*, deserve our constant and strict regard consider'd as *general rules*, and are always proper to influence and determine our conduct.

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SECONDLY, I shall briefly point out the *particular Virtues*, that are more directly included in each of these rules. And,

IN the THIRD place, explain distinctly the latter clause of the text : *If there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think on these things.*

I BEGIN with endeavouring to shew, that every one of these branches--*whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report*, deserve our constant and strict regard, considered as *general rules*, and are always proper to influence and determine our conduct. By the *things which are true* in this large sense are meant those habits, and that course of life and manners, which are *agreeable* to the state and original disposition of things in *Nature*; which are *suitable* to our own *frame*, and the *rank* and *character* we sustain in the Universe, and to the *relations* we bear, and the various *obligations* we are under, to other Beings.---Now to assert, that this is *one invariable* standard to which we are oblig'd to conform, is only asserting in other words, that we are all bound to live and  
act.

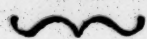
act like ourselves, and not like different SERM.  
*Beings* from what we really are; and that XI.  
 we are bound to have exactly the *same* con- ~  
 sideration of our fellow-creatures, and to  
 treat them in the *same* manner. And the  
 contrary scheme supposes, that we are at  
 full liberty, upon every start of humour,  
 every impulse of headstrong appetite, to  
 violate the settled *Order* of the *World*;  
 and that monstrous and unnatural charac-  
 ters are equally to be approv'd, with those  
 which are form'd on the strictest rules of  
*truth* and *propriety*: All which is directly  
 repugnant to the first and plainest principles  
 of reason.

FOR no *self-evident* proposition can be  
 more certain and undeniable than this---  
 That to contradict the *Truth* of things in  
 our *Practice* is precisely the same absurdity,  
 as to deny it in *speculation*---Should a *Bene-*  
*factor*, for instance, make professions of  
*Gratitude* to one who had never serv'd him,  
 but whom he himself had signally oblig'd;  
 there is no Man who would not consider  
 him either as acting a *ridiculous*, or an *insult-*  
*ing* part. If the person *oblig'd* therefore,  
 forgetting all the ties of gratitude, acts in  
 such



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such a manner towards his benefactor, as if the *latter* had really receiv'd the obligation; the *impropriety* of this behaviour must force us to conclude, either that he has quite lost his *senses*, or has no regard to *decency*. Again, if a Man should attempt to live as if he had *no* appetites, this would be censur'd by all as very wild and extravagant. But it must surely be as manifest an absurdity, if he assumes the character of an abandon'd *sensualist*, and acts as if he was *all* appetite, a mere low *animal* composition; and had no such *refin'd* and *superior* principle in him as reason, and the power of reflection. The absurdity in both these instances arises from hence, that they are plain deviations from *Nature* and *Truth*; i. e. from the *true constitution, order, and design* of things upon the whole, considered in all their mutual and various *references, dependencies, and subordinations* to each other. And let us but extend this reasoning and apply it to every other case, thereby framing a *universal* rule; and it will amount to neither *more* nor *less* than what the Apostle has prescrib'd in the text---  
*what-*

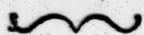
*whatsoever things are true---think on these things.* SERM.  
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AND (2dly)---On *whatsoever things* are *honest*, or as the original word signifies, *grave, decent, venerable*: Not *affected* and *formal*, nor *morose* and *splenetic*, nor *recluse* and *unsociable*: For these are the natural properties of ignorance and craft, of peevishness and discontent, of pride and enthusiasm; but such a conduct as springs from serious reflection, as argues solidity of judgment, and a calm and steady temper; and is therefore *decent*, because becoming the importance and dignity of *Human nature*; and *venerable*, as it both tends to *create*, and *deserves* respect.

AND that the pursuit of these things is another *general Rule*, which claims our highest and strictest regard, cannot but be universally acknowledg'd, as long as there are any moral faculties, any sentiments of honour, any seeds of generosity subsisting in Mankind. For can it ever be esteem'd a matter of perfect *indifference*, whether rational Beings are sedate and serious, or thoughtless, vain, and trifling; whether characters

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ters are supported with a just decorum, or sullied and debas'd, and render'd contemptible and useless, by an improper behaviour; and indeed whether Human Nature itself be honour'd by maintaining its original worth and excellence, or stained and disgraced by mean and groveling pursuits, and an infamous subjection to vile and inordinate passions? Whoever has prevail'd with himself to believe this must already be so wofully deprav'd, that it is impossible for him to *sink lower* than he is; and almost equally impossible, since he has no one ingenuous principle left within him, that he should ever *rise higher*, or be recover'd from this extreme and total degeneracy.

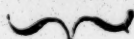
FROM what has been said under the two foregoing heads it necessarily follows, that it must be our indispensable duty to adhere constantly to *whatsoever things are just*, i. e. in the unrestrain'd and general acceptation of the term, *right* and *fit in themselves*; and to *whatsoever things are pure*, or which have a direct and certain tendency to *refine* and *perfect* our superior intelligent frame. For if things are *right*



*in themselves*, because they *correspond* with the establish'd scheme of the Universe, with *truth*, and all our ideas of natural order and harmony; and if the same things are likewise *pure*, because they preserve the *comeliness* and *honour* of Human nature uncorrupted and unsullied: *Every* obligation that lies upon us to conform our actions to the *Truth* of things must, of course, infer an *equal* degree of obligation to *right* action; and *all* the ties, by which we are bound to preserve the complexion of our minds and our moral faculties fair and unspotted, in order to behave with a *decent gravity*, and render human nature *venerable*, must also be consider'd as *so many* indissoluble bonds of duty to cultivate *universal purity* of dispositions, affections, and manners.--But it really disparages and degrades sober reasoning to attempt to prove by *formal* arguments, that it *is right* for mankind, and all other moral agents, to do what is *in itself right*; and that innocence and an untainted simplicity deserv'd to be *preferr'd* to corruption and disorder.

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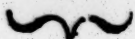
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AND

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AND if there are any *things* in themselves *lovely*, it can admit of no possible dispute, whether they are the natural and just objects of our *Esteem* and *Choice*. For to say of Characters---that *they are lovely*---and that *they deserve* our *Love*--is only expressing the *self-same* idea by different terms: And to say--that *they deserve our Love*, and therefore ought to be *delighted in*--and that because they ought to be *delighted in*, they should be diligently and constantly *cultivated*, and *improv'd*--This, again, is only laying down a *plain principle*, and asserting the *necessary consequences* which result from it. When an argument is reduced to this single question, whether it be *fit* for us to *fly from* those things, that *naturally* inspire an agreeable pleasure, and *pursue* others, which *naturally* create disgust and aversion, *i. e.* to *hate* what we ought to love, and *love* what we ought to hate; or thus, whether Man, who is endu'd with reason, should endeavour to make himself an *amiable*, or a *horrid* and *detestable* creature---it may be left to the very lowest capacity to *arbitrate*, and decide the controversy. For it will as well!

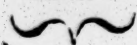
well bear a dispute --- whether *War*, *Pe-*  
*stilence*, and *Famine* are not equally de-  
fireable with *Peace*, *Health*, and *Plenty*. And  
was there any Being formed with such an  
original moral depravity, as to have *no*  
*Sense* of amiable actions, but a strong and  
constant *propensity* to the contrary, it wou'd  
without the least hesitation be condemn'd  
as the most monstrous Piece, that ever yet  
appear'd among all the *irregular* and *mis-*  
*shapen* productions of *Nature*: And even  
the *Atheist* himself would be apt to lay  
hold of such an *inexplicable Prodigy*, as  
an unanswerable objection against the ex-  
istence of a God, and a wise superintend-  
ing Providence.

FINALLY, This also is a right *general*  
*rule* of Conduct -- *Whatsoever things* are of  
*good report* -- *think on these things*. By which  
we are not to understand those Actions,  
which suit the taste and genius of the *Coun-*  
*try* where we live, and are reverenc'd and  
admir'd from the force of *education* and  
*habit*, or because they agree with opinions  
and prejudices receiv'd from our *Ancestors*;  
but such Actions only as have *universally*  
*a good report* in all Nations, and among  
all Mankind, however *disagreeing* in their



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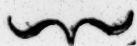


Sentiments, and Customs, and Forms of Religion. Whatever is of this kind, it may fairly be presum'd, has a solid foundation in the *common frame* of human Nature, and that the approbation of it springs from *Reason*, and not from the strength of *Prepossession*. For no *mere irrational Prepossession* ever was so universal; there never appear'd any one *arbitrary Rule*, that was commended and celebrated by all. When therefore Actions, or moral Characters, are found to have the *united testimony* of *Mankind* in their favour, it is altogether unnatural to ascribe this *agreement* of *Sentiment*, and *harmony* of *Applause*, either to *mere Chance*, or *Prejudice*, which in every other case are infinitely *various*; nor indeed can we pretend to account for it with any appearance of Reason, unless it be by supposing the *intrinsic* and *immutable* Excellence of the things themselves, and that there is one original and superior faculty, which, with respect to general Rules of eternal use and importance to *all*, dictates to *all alike*; and is therefore the *Light*, the *Voice*, the *Law* of God in his *Creature*, and *Subject*,  
Man

Man -- So that from hence we may collect the true intent and sum of the Apostle's advice in the words which we are now considering, and that is, that we steadily attend to and constantly practise all those things, which, because they are *in their own nature praise-worthy*, are allowed, *every where*, to be necessary branches of a right, decent, and honourable behaviour. And, upon the very same principle, it ought to be our determin'd and invariable purpose to act in *opposition* to the *partial Sense* of the Majority among ourselves, whenever it contradicts the *Rule of Truth*, and makes a *false report* of the nature of things; representing those as reputable and excellent, which are really base and infamous.---The applauses of Men are always to be *declined* and *despis'd*, when they are annexed to *undeserving* Characters; to be *abhorr'd* when they are bestowed on *vicious* Characters; but if they spring from the pure and uncorrupted dictates of *universal Reason*, they are a motive rightly adapted to influence an *ingenuous* Mind, and excite a *noble* and *laudable* ambition.

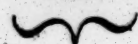
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THUS have I largely consider'd the text as containing *general Rules* of conduct, by which the *Morality* of Actions is to be tried. And this must be a useful way of treating the Subject, because it furnishes our Minds with immutable principles of *Right*, and represents to us in a narrow compass all the *genuine Properties* of Virtue; every one of which is not only a *distinguishing Criterion* by which it may be certainly *known*, but a *strong argument* for the *Practice* of it. I now proceed,

To the SECOND thing propos'd, which was to point out briefly the *particular Virtues*, that are more directly included in *each* of these Characters. The confining myself to this would have allow'd, to this excellent Passage of *St. Paul*, less *scope* and *latitude* than it is fairly capable of --- But to avoid the same *defect*, the *particular Virtues* ought to be distinctly specify'd.

IN the FIRST place then, it is natural to understand the Apostle as intending, by the *things that are true*, to recommend the Virtues of *Truth* and *Fidelity*: i. e. *Sincerity* in all our professions of reverence and duty to *God*, and of respect

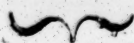


spect and service to our *Fellow-creatures*; the being *true* to our *Friendships*, to our *Promises*, and *Contracts*; and discharging with diligence and an exact care every *Trust* that is reposed in us--The contrary Vices are--*Diffimulation*, *deceitful Compliment*, *Lying*, *Fraud*, and *Treachery*, which are infallible indications of a selfish and base disposition, and the source of endless discord and confusion in Societies. Whereas the Virtues, which they oppose, are the immediate supports of *Order*, the bond of *Union* and *Harmony*, and the chief ground and security of *mutual confidence*.

AGAIN, In the *things* that are *grave*, *decent*, and *venerable*, are particularly included a *calm composed temper*, free from perturbations and violent excesses of Passions; a *uniform* and *unshaken resolution* to adhere to the principles of Truth and Right; that *sedateness* and *dignity* of behaviour, which are the natural result of inward regularity, and a just self-esteem; and maintaining the *credit* and *honour* of particular characters by such a *decent* and *steady* behaviour, as both merits, and will command, *esteem*. To these instances of

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*manly and venerable* conduct are opposed-- a *slavish Subjection* to wanton and unruly appetites, which engage in low and unbecoming pursuits that render Human nature *despicable*; a *fickle, unstable, fluctuating temper*; *levity of carriage*; *vanity and ridiculous affectation in dress*; *unguarded familiarities and condescensions*, that lessen our weight and influence; and, finally, all such deportment as is *unsuitable* to our *peculiar* rank and station, and tends to disgrace it.

IN the next to this Head are comprehended all the different branches and offices of *Justice*: An exact and scrupulous regard to the *Rights* of others, with a deliberate and fix'd purpose to preserve them, upon all occasions, sacred and inviolate, and, from this fair and *equitable Temper*, performing every necessary *Art* of *Justice*, that relates to their *persons* or *properties*; being *just* to their *Merit*, and *just* to their very *Infirmities*, by making all the *Allowances* in their favour, which their *Circumstances* require, and a *good-natur'd* and *reasonable* construction of particular cases will admit of; being *just* in our *traffick*, *just* in our *demands*,

*demands, and just, by observing a due moderation and proportion, even in our resentments.* The distinct offices of justice are indeed somewhat *various*, as Mens conditions and characters differ; but the general obligation and the general rules are *one* and the *same*; which may easily be reduc'd to that admirable maxim of our blessed Saviour, the *compendium* and *substance* of all equity---*Whatsoever ye wou'd that Men should do to you, were they in your circumstances, and you in theirs, do ye even so to them.* Let me add before I leave this Head, that the virtue of *Justice* is not only the main pillar and strength of societies, but, as it were, the *essential* and *vital spirit* by which they subsist; and that the contrary vices, *viz. Censoriousness, Detraction, Slander, undermining Arts, rigorous Oppression, and Injuries of every kind*, are directly calculated to *dissolve* the frame of all governments, to render a regular Social life absolutely *impossible*, and Human life itself *unsupportable*.

Matt. vii.  
12.

LET us now go on to the following article, *whatsoever things are pure, by*



SERM. which are chiefly meant the virtues of  
 XI. *Continence and Chastity*; a strict abstinence  
 ~~~~~ from all irregular gratifications of the  
sensual appetites, and from the pursuit of
 those unlawful and *polluted* pleasures, to
 which carnal minds are devoted.--- Op-
 posed to this branch of virtue stand---the
 infamous sin of *Adultery*, detested and
 branded universally wherever the *Light of*
Nature prevails; *Fornication*; *actions* or
discourses offensive and shocking to *Modesty*;
 which are all known, and fitly describ'd, by
 the name of *Impurities*, because they spread
Defilement and a deadly *Taint* over the
 whole soul, and enslave every faculty to
Sense and *gross* conceptions: In conse-
 quence of which, they create a strong
 aversion to *intellectual* and *spiritual* em-
 ployments, and the Divine pleasures of
moral Rectitude.

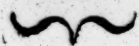
AND, Finally, by *the things which* are
of good report, if any *particular Virtues*
 are design'd, those must be understood,
 which are universally celebrated as the
 marks of a *sublime* and *noble* disposition;
 and by the *things* that are amiable and
lovely, those virtues which have a *pecu-*
liar

liar attractive beauty and gracefulness. And what are they? -- Let every Man ask himself, and he will readily answer --- a *disinterested and unconfin'd Benevolence, Generosity, returning Good for Evil, Moderation in Affluence and Power, Humility and Condescension in high Stations.* Let him ask himself on the contrary, what are the most *reproachful and odious Vices*, and he will answer again --- *Selfishness, Narrowness of Heart, an implacable Revenge, dishonouring and corrupting the Innocent to satiate a wild and brutal Passion, Haughtiness and Insolence, Ingratitude, and Cruelty.* -- So that the course lies open and plain before us in which we may *adorn Human nature*, and advance it to the highest pitch of *Moral Beauty*; as well as the opposite Path, that necessarily leads to *Deformity and Shame.* Nothing now remains but,

IN the THIRD place, to explain briefly the latter clause of the text --- *If there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these things.* It may perhaps be thought, that nothing is here suggested but what was fully comprehended in the preceding articles; and the mentioning *Virtue*
and

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and *Praise*, after the things that are *true*, *venerable*, *just*, *pure*, and *lovely*, may seem at first sight to be quite superfluous. But St. *Paul* ought not to be so *lightly* censur'd; who appears to have been a person of *uncommon* discernment, and *deep* reflection.---We may search in his writings, and find a great deal of useful matter, besides what lies plain upon the *surface*.---And there are, I think, two or three senses, which the passage now before us will naturally bear, that are not unworthy our regard.

FOR, in the FIRST place, this clause *If there be any Virtue*, and *if there be any Praise*---may be consider'd as a *motive* to think on *whatsoever* is *true*, *comely*, *right*, *pure*, and *amiable*: And then it must be thus interpreted--That if *virtue* be a *reality*, and not an empty fiction, and if there be in *Nature* any just ground of *praise*, it must of necessity lie in such things as these-- Or else (2dly) The Apostle might design to intimate to us, that if there was any *particular* *virtue* that belong'd more *immediately* to our character, and would help to give it a greater *lustre*;
this

this we should be *especially* careful to pursue and cultivate.--Or (3dly) That if there was any good quality of a *transcendent* worth and excellence, and which justly entitled those who were possess'd of it to *extraordinary* applause and honour; we should even think it our duty ardently to aspire after *that*, and count it a highly commendable and *virtuous* ambition to endeavour to excel in it.

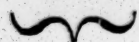
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WE see now, upon the whole, that, in *a single passage* of the New Testament, we have a *complete system* of Morals as it were in *Miniature*.--The natural and unchangeable *foundation* of virtue is clearly *asserted*, and wisely *laid*, and *exhibited* in a proper *variety* of lights --- The *characters* are so contriv'd that they may be consider'd as *general rules*, at the same time that they direct our view to almost all the *particular branches* of morality--- And, to render the account as comprehensive as possible, a clause is added, in which, by a fair and easy interpretation, the *peculiar duties* of every rank and condition, and the noblest *refinements* and *heights* of virtue may be supposed to be inculcated.

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And, from the *abridgment* of its precepts here given by *St. Paul*, we may reasonably infer---the *extent*, the *sublimity*, the *perfection* of that Moral goodness, which the Gospel requires---that its adversaries can take no more effectual method to expose either their weakness, or their presumption, or their malice, than by attacking it on *this head*---and that these Christians, who substitute the *righteousness*, *merits*, and *intercession* of Christ in the room of the *indispensable necessity* of a strict and universal virtue, grossly misrepresent and reproach Christianity; and of consequence -- *blaspheme* the author of it.

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S E R M O N X I I .

Of Sincerity, as opposed to Prejudice.

J O H N i. 45, 46, 47.

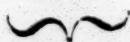
Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.



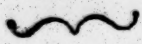
THE character here given of Nathanael is eminent both for its intrinsic Merit, and publick Usefulness --- viz. that of an artless unadulterate simplicity, that is neither bias'd by

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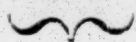
by sinister views, nor spotted by criminal passions; but scorning dissimulations and disguises, the natural and usual shelter of *base* and *corrupted* Minds, is unaffectedly honest and generous in all its designs and actions; sincere in every expression of piety to God, and abounding in candour, humanity, and an equitable temper to all Mankind. This is a character form'd upon the noblest principles, which enables a Man to look *inward*, and examine the recesses of his own heart with pleasure, and commands *respect* and *confidence* from others; a character so universally engaging and beneficial, that it stops the mouth of *Calumny*, and *Envy itself* can scarce repine at the deference which is paid to it, and the infinite Governour of the World honours it with his particular Favour: In short, it is a character, without which we are not fitted as we ought to be for the *business*, *society*, and *proper enjoyments* of *Men*, i. e. of reasonable Beings, here upon earth; and much less for a more *perfect* and *exalted* station of dignity and happiness in the future immortal existence.

How

How then, it may be ask'd, shall we *deserve* this character to which it should be our highest ambition to aspire, as what is the *Glory* of human Nature, and the *Delight* of the Deity?--- The right methods to be pursued by us are these, which are plainly suggested in the text. (1st) That we disengage ourselves from all weak and vicious *Prejudices*, which enslave the Judgment to fancy or appetite; and give even to Truth and Virtue, and the most rational and important principles of Religion, the *complexion* and *colour* of falsehood. And that having discarded *Prejudice*, that never-failing source of *confused ideas* and *irregular Morals*, we apply ourselves to a serious and cool *Examination* of the principles we have entertain'd, cherish an *ingenuous* and *inquisitive* temper, and admit of nothing as the *ground-work* of our reasonings about virtue and piety, before we have *try'd* it by the infallible standard of truth and right. And when we have corrected our apprehensions, and settled our scheme, by deliberate and impartial reflection, to compleat all, we must *follow our light* through all the

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the *consequences* which it plainly points out to us, and *adhere* to it *invariably* as the director and guide of our practice; sacrificing fond opinion, inordinate passion, present interest, and the most tempting prospects of wealth and honour, in order to preserve a *clear* and *untainted* integrity: Which is the most *glorious* cause, that it can ever be in our power to assert and vindicate---a cause, in which the *supreme good* of Mankind, and of every rational Being in the Universe, is necessarily involv'd.

It appears from the text, that *Nathanael*, though otherwise of a fair and equitable Disposition, had imbib'd *one* principle at least *implicitly*. He fell in with the common error of the *Jews*, which was strenuously supported by their *Priests*, and the grave *doctors* of their law, and by the *Pharisees*, the most distinguish'd and popular of all their sects; who seem to have been unanimously agreed, that *no* great *Prophet* would *arise out of Galilee*. As *Nazareth* therefore, the supposed place of our Saviour's birth, was situate in this *despised* part of *Judea*, from whence, as they had ignorantly presum'd, the gifts and
illu-

illuminations of *Prophecy* could never spring; it was natural for *Nathanael*, while he labour'd under the same *prepossession*, to urge this *minute* and *trifling* circumstance, as an objection of considerable weight, against the pretensions and claim of *Jesus* to be the promised *Messiah*. Accordingly we find, that it immediately occur'd to him, and he ask'd this question, *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* --- Upon which *Philip* acted like a person of solid *Judgment* and *Experience*; and instead of opposing this groundless prejudice directly, which would probably have render'd it more stiff and obstinate, he only made a proposal that every candid and modest temper must readily approve of---*Come and see*: As if he had said, "*Examine the fact impartially, weigh the evidence by which it is supported, and when you have done this, faithfully follow the dictates of your understanding and conscience.*" And the result of all was, that this upright man, whose prejudices were *pliable*, and *yielding* to conviction, as having been always kept within bounds by his superior love of *Truth*; the result, I say, of the whole was,

T

that

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that he freely and humbly acknowledged, as soon as *sufficient proof* was afforded him, the authority and Divine mission of Christ in these words: *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.*

WE have here a specimen both of the *Honesty* and *just Sentiments* of the first converts to Christianity. For *Philip* (as well as *Nathanael*) before he could embrace this new Religion that was so much exclaim'd against and villified, must have conquer'd many *strong* and *inveterate Prejudices*. But then, on the other hand, we see nothing of a weak and easy *Credulity*, not one mark of a blind and presumptuous *Enthusiasm*; no Faith is recommended but what is entirely *rational*, and built upon *Evidence* -- For the *Primitive Christian Doctrine* was this --- *Come and see*; *i.e.* in other words, "Let not your *Faith* exceed, or go beyond, your *Understanding*:" And to believe without ideas, or *against* the demonstrations of reason and sense, is the mysterious and incomprehensible jargon of *later* and more *degenerate* times. I shall, in what remains, consider the passage, from which I am discouraging

courting only as *historical*; without insisting distinctly on the particular propositions contain'd in it. And in this view it yields the following observations.

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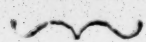
FIRST, That men of *real Integrity*, and even those who are remarkable for *Candour* and *Probity* of Mind, may be influenced by groundless prejudices. But though this, taking Human nature and the situation and state of things in the World as they are, is in a manner unavoidable. Yet,

SECONDLY, Wherever there is that *Sincerity*, which is described in the text, it will never suffer any prejudices to be so perverse and unruly, as to prevent *new Inquiries* on all *proper* occasions.

THIRDLY, To be open to *Correction*, and submit to the authority and force of *Truth* against the opposition made to it by prejudices that have been long entertain'd, that are generally espous'd, and which custom has mark'd as sacred, is one of the *clearest Proofs* that can be given of a thorough undissembled *Honesty*.

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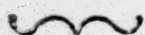
THE FIRST observation was this, That men of *real Integrity*, and even those who are remarkable for *Candour* and *Probity* of Mind, may be influenced by groundless prejudices: Which indeed is only saying in other words, that Men of great innocence and simplicity are not *absolutely infallible* — Let us even suppose an *eminent* degree of integrity to be united in one character with a *capacious* understanding, and an *improved* judgment; there will still be *confus'd* conceptions and *partial* views of many things. The Mind is so limited in its operations, that it must acquire its knowledge by *degrees*; and while it applies itself to the contemplation and diligent study of *one* point, so as to digest it thoroughly and gain an adequate notion of it, it must labour under *uncertainty* and be subject to *error* with respect to *others*, which it has not had an Opportunity of searching into. But it is almost self-evident, that whoever is subject to *error*, and this is the case of the most strictly *upright* and *conscientious* Person upon earth, from his very constitution and the original state of his faculties;

ties; whoever, I say, is subject to *error* will be unavoidably subject to *prejudice* in *proportion*: Since *all error* is, in some degree or other, a *prejudice* against the Truth. For as long as *false* principles are entertain'd (and something of this kind will ever happen from the natural imperfection and scantiness of the Human intellect) an *honest* Man will be led by the very *ingenuity* of his temper to oppose the *truth*, so far as it *directly contradicts* those *false* principles, which appear in a different light to him, and he imagines to be *just* and *right*. And if this holds true with respect to Persons of *superior* attainments, and an *extensive* compass of thought and experience; it must certainly follow, that the *Generality*, with narrow capacities, little leisure for application, and few advantages for improvement, may be influenced by many *unallow'd* and *imperceptible* prejudices, consistently with the purest and best intentions, and an uncorrupted heart.

THERE are scarce any circumstances, from which, with respect to *these* at least, *Prejudices* may not spring up-- Their education, and the piety of their Ancestors, in

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a particular way of *belief* and *religious profession* make that sort of belief and profession, however *erroneous*, to appear venerable. For the *Piety* and the *Errors* of their Forefathers are blended together, as if they had an inseparable connection in the nature of things: Whereas, what was *really* excellent and praise-worthy in such characters might be deriv'd from quite another source, *viz.* from the *common essential* principles of Virtue and Christianity, in which sincere Men of all denominations are agreed; and their *peculiarities* might have this effect only --- to *blemish* and *debase* their *Piety* by irrational and superstitious mixtures.

AGAIN, In persons unused to reflection, their *natural disposition*, and even their *virtuous and good affections*, will sometimes beget *prejudices*.--For *some* truths are more adapted to a particular complexion, than *others*: The idea, for instance, of a stern and arbitrary Deity suits with *austere* and *rigid* tempers. And when Men find, that *certain principles*, however *wrong* in themselves, have with them been *Helps* to Devotion, and *Motives* to the practice of religious

ligious Duties; they are apt to consider these Motives, which perhaps are in a great measure *constitutional*, or by long custom have acquired a strength and influence equal to that of *truth*, as *universal* and *necessary Motives* to a holy life: To take away which, is to subvert the foundation of all religion. Add to this, that sometimes *Friendships*, sometimes a *hum-ble unsuspicious* temper, that places an *un- due Confidence* in persons of a specious character for knowledge and eminent re- pute for sanctity, will occasion *prejudices* against the most important truths: Which may come at length to be *fixed*, and of consequence to be extremely *dangerous*, be- cause hard to be eradicated. And the con- clusion from the whole is, that Men of great *Integrity*, with *weak Understandings*, may be subject to *prejudice* various ways; and that when *Wisdom* and *uncommon Virtue* unite their force in order to drive out this enemy to Truth, there must still be a *possibility* of its subsisting in every *form* and *degree*, in which there is a possibility of *Error*. We see therefore that this conclusion, which the text suggests, is agreeable likewise to

SERM. the *frame* of Human Nature, and to the
 XII. *reason* of things.

BUT as observations of this kind are not for *amusement* but *use*, the natural drift and tendency of what has been said is to excite us to *search* ourselves, and *try* our tempers; to *guard* against every *wrong bias* in the understanding and the affections; to *find out* those *latent prejudices* that may have long harbour'd within us; and to see that what we have entertain'd be not *mere Prepossessions*, but *sound* and *right* principles. For it is in *Religion*, as in all other matters of *Science* and *rational disquisition*: All *consequences*, rightly drawn, will be of the same nature with the *principles* from which they are deduc'd. If therefore we assume principles that are weak and groundless, or principles dishonourable to the perfections and moral government of Almighty God, the reasonings that are fairly and justly form'd upon them cannot terminate in *one single truth*; but it is easy to see whether they may lead us, and that is, into the most *absurd* and *dangerous Errors*. This brings to

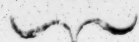
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THE SECOND remark, which was this, That where there is that *Sincerity*, which is described in the text, it will never suffer any prejudices to be so perverse and unruly, as to prevent *new inquiries* on all *proper* occasions. Our duty, in this respect, is exemplified and set before us in a clear light in the character of *Nathanael*; who, though he still retained the prejudices of his education, which were supported by the authority and patronage of the greatest names in the whole *Jewish* nation, preserv'd notwithstanding his *Liberty* and the command of his *Judgment* and *Resolution* so far, as to be disposed to *attend calmly*, and receive any *new Light* that might be offer'd him, and even to *correct* the sentiments that grew up with him from his early years, and which had tradition, custom, and power on their side, upon the *first sufficient* evidence.

WHAT appears to have been this good Man's conduct is a universal rule of *Reason*. Prejudices there *may be*; nay, a multiplicity of prejudices, while the World continues in its present state, there undoubtedly

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doubtedly *will be*: But to *cherish* any criminal bias, to allow preconceived opinions to obscure, and cramp, and captivate the judgment -- this *ought not to be*, if there be any distinction of right and wrong. -- For can we pretend to be certain, that all our prepossessions are *right*? that no *Error* cleaves to us? that we are exempted from that *Fallibility*, which universally and necessarily attends Human nature? If this *is not*, and *cannot be*, the case, what ground have we, as persons of *integrity* and of a *disinterested* and *impartial* disposition, to shut our eyes, and acquiesce *indolently* in the sentiments which we have already embraced? Are we resolved *never to alter* principles that may possibly be false? -- This is both *absurd*, and *disingenuous*. Are we determin'd to adhere to our principles whether it be *with* reason, or *against* it? --- This can spring from nothing but a *habit* of *dishonesty*. Or do we fancy a particular set of opinions, because they are become *familiar* to us, or because they are *hereditary*, or because they suit the *singularity* of our *taste*, or *something else* in us, which we cannot

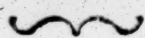
well

well tell how to account for? This sup-
poses that Religion, on which all our ra-
tional hopes of happiness depend, is a mat-
ter in itself of perfect *indifference*, that varies
with the traditions and usages of different
nations, and is left to be fram'd and mo-
dell'd according to every man's inclination:
So that it is of very little importance what
notion we form of it, if we retain the word,
and usurp the *outward profession*. But surely
these are *abuses* too gross and palpable to be
reconciled with *ingenuity*, and *uprightness*
of heart. For it is an *essential part*, it is
almost the *strict definition*, of *sincerity*, to
be only solicitous that *Truth* and *Righ-*
teousness may prevail; and to be no other-
wise concerned about *particular Schemes*,
than as they are capable of being justified
and defended by the unalterable rule of
Reason, and the original standard of re-
veal'd Religion. It was observ'd in

THE THIRD place, That to be open
to *Conviction*, and submit to the authority
and force of *Truth* against the opposition
made to it by prejudices that have been
long entertain'd, that are generally ef-
fectual,

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poused, and which custom has mark'd as sacred, is one of the *clearest proofs* that can be given of a thorough and undissembled Honesty. This Remark is so obvious in itself, that a very brief illustration of it will suffice. The case is just the same with respect to *inquiries after truth*, as in the *practice of the moral virtues*. There are some virtues, which a Man's natural disposition may lead him to cultivate; and this is his great *advantage*, but no convincing proof either of his *Resolution*, or inward *Probity*. On the other hand, there may be some vices, to which he has no direct and strong *Propensity*; and the avoiding these can therefore be no sure demonstration of the *uprightness* and *rectitude* of his temper—So, likewise, where there are dishonest views, but *no particular opposite bias*, truth may find as easy an access—as to better Minds. But the *test* of *integrity* is this only: In the one case, when a Man is *virtuous* against the weight of powerful temptations, and relinquishes his predominant and most agreeable vices; and, in the other, when he *maintains* the
natural

natural liberty of his Understanding, and *embraces truth*, against prepossession, or worldly interest--- This indeed must be allow'd to be a noble struggle and effort of *Integrity* against the enlaving power of *Prejudice*; and plainly shews, that honour, and virtue, and the love of truth have the *ascendant*.

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SUFFER me now, for the conclusion of this discourse, by a few *natural*, and I hope not *unseasonable*, reflections, to apply what has been said to *our own times*, and the *present state of religion* among ourselves-- That a *general spirit of inquiry*, a *seeming thirst* after knowledge, and *very free* debates about religion prevails now, more than in some former ages-- I readily admit. But, I presume, it must be allow'd, that we have our *prejudices* too, though differing in *kind* perhaps from those of our Forefathers; and that these prejudices have sometimes a *corrupt* and *unwarrantable* influence against the reason and nature of things, and principles of Divine and infallible truth. This, I think, is stating the case with the utmost *modesty* and *caution*

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tion——To say less would be *dissimulation*.

AND if we go on to examine we shall find, that the *prejudices* which obtain in *different* times are as to their *ground* and *foundation* much the *same*, i. e. remarkably slight and trivial. That current prejudice amongst the *Jews* during the time of our Saviour's ministry, which the text particularly mentions, every one will now acknowledge to have been extremely weak and frivolous-- But does it not appear, that we have some prejudices among ourselves that argue equal *presumption*, or *ignorance*, or *obstinacy*; and which are less to be accounted for in this *refined* and *enlightened* age, unless our partiality deceives us, and makes us boast of greater *Knowledge*, *Ingenuity*, and *Liberty*, than we are really possessed of.——If there are *some* among us who pretend to *Religion*, without knowing, as they ought, what true Religion *means*; or who profess to be *Christians*, without having sufficiently examin'd what Christianity *means*. There are *others* who set up for being *Free-Thinkers*, without understanding what Free-thinking *means*--

i. e.

i. e. *impartial, just, and generous* thinking--Not the taking *a liberty* to oppose the common sense of Mankind purely to shew that we are under no restraint, and have lost all sense of decency--nor *assuming* the character of being *wiser* and more *unprejudiced* than others are, when we have taken much less pains to inform and improve our Understandings. These things are a just ground of complaint, and worth searching into; because Truth and Virtue, and the most important interest of Mankind, are *at stake*: And, I am persuaded, that they will *all* be found, upon examination, to proceed in a great measure from the *want* of that *incorruption* and *simplicity* of mind, which our blessed Saviour commended in *Nathanael*.

THE question of *old* was - *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Now it is changed, and the strain of the Infidel objection differs -- thus -- "*Can there any good thing come from dreams, and prophecies, and the pretence of supernatural revelations?*" To which I shall answer as *Philip* did -- *Come and see*. If it be asked with respect to the *doctrinal*
contro-

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SERM. *controversies* that subsist among Christians--

XII. "Can any good thing proceed from those

~ "who are *branded* with *opprobrious* names,
 "and marks of *Infamy*?" The natural
 answer is again the same -- *Come and see* :
 i. e. Try the merits of the cause, *search* it
 to the bottom, and *weigh* the evidence
 fairly, before you *presume* to pass judg-
 ment. If this method, which immedi-
 ately strikes our *natural sense of equity*,
 was universally [and honestly pursued, the
 consequence would probably be this, to
 the joy of every *wise* and *good* man-- That
 there would be much less of *Error* in
 points of any considerable moment, whe-
 ther in *speculation*, or *practice*; and the
influence of the *error* that still remain'd,
 arising from the *incurable* imperfection
 and weakness of Human nature, would
 be scarce *felt*, if condescension, and mu-
 tual forbearance, and a *harmony* of mild
 and benevolent affections, supply'd the
 place of that *unity of opinion*---Which is
 morally speaking -- *impossible*.



S E R M O N XIII.



Of the true idea and improvement of Human Life.

ECCLES. vii. 1.

-----*And the day of Death than
the day of ones Birth.*



HERE is nothing of more certain and universal importance than a right consideration and estimate of Human Life, and, at the same time, no point, about which the sentiments of Mankind are more divided, and inconsistent with each other--The World,

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in

SERM. in which we now reside, affords to some
 XIII. *fair and tempting prospects*: They think
 that they see many *charms* and *agreeable advantages* in it, which worthily engage their affections.--This, to such as are of a different turn, and who have been used to other *impressions*, appears extremely surprizing. For the same World to their view is a *vale of tears*, a *region of darkness*; and Human life a *tiresome pilgrimage* through a wild and rude desert planted thick with snares and dangers, and a scene of endless *impertinence* and *disquietude*.--There may be great mistakes on both sides, according to the principles by which each party are influenc'd. And it will be sufficient to enable us to fix, in general, the just *medium*, if we distinctly examine where the *truth*, and where the *error*, lies with respect to the *latter* opinion; which seems not only to be *countenanc'd*, but *express'd* in the strongest terms, by *Solomon* in the text.

THE proposition therein contain'd may be consider'd in three different lights--As the *sentiment* of a *peevish* man, uneasy and discontented with his station and circumstances

and improvement of Human life.

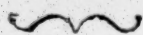
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stances in the World--As the *language* of a *Sceptick* disposed to cavil, and find fault with the present constitution--Or as the *sentiment* of a *wise* and *good* man built on sober reflection, and the solid principles of Reason and Religion. Under the two first of these heads, it will naturally fall in our way to rectify some *false* opinions, that spring from impatience, prejudice, and superficial knowledge; and are both dishonourable to God, and *debase* Mankind: And under the last, we shall have an opportunity of explaining and fixing the only *rational* and *consistent* sense in which it can be said, that *the day of Death* is better *than the day of ones Birth*. Let us then consider it,

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FIRST, As the sentiment of a *peevish* man, uneasy and discontented with his station and circumstances in the World-- In this view of it, it does not indeed to properly deserve to be called *Sentiment*, as *Passion*. It is not the result of a cool deliberate *judgment*; formed on mature examination, and a due estimate and comparison of things; but of *self-conceit*,

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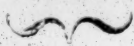
blind resentment, and a fallen gloominess of temper, that confound and cloud the understanding, hurry it on to hasty conclusions, and represent all objects in disagreeable colours. Persons of this unhappy complexion shew a peculiar art and dexterity in making the worst of their condition, and turning every thing against themselves. They aggravate the disappointments and afflictions which they meet with, and overlook all the favourable circumstances, all the conveniencies and pleasures of their situation in life, as if they were unworthy of their regard: Though perhaps, at the same time, the advantages which they enjoy are many, and substantial, but their miseries only imaginary. They entertain extravagant expectations, and are alarm'd by false terrors; and if their unreasonable desires are not gratified, if their fanciful schemes of happiness prove abortive, they generally vent their spleen in exclaiming against the present state of Human nature as if it was full of darkness and distress, with very few bright and chearful intervals; and are forward to have recourse to Solomon's authority,

erty, and urge what he has asserted as a SERM.
wise and indubitable maxim--That *the* XIII.
day of Death is better *than the day of*
ones Birth. But though this may be a
just sentiment, and a very natural re-
flection, in some *peculiar* circumstances,
and when it is grounded on *right* prin-
ciples, it is undeniably wrong, when it
arises from *fretfulness* and *impatience*;
when it supposes, that the merciful Cre-
ator of Mankind hath made their Ex-
istence in this world so disconsolate, that
an *entire cessation of thought and sense*;
an *utter loss of being*, is *universally* more
desireable; and, consequently, that though
he has indeed display'd his *power*, and a
great deal of curious skill and *contrivance*,
there are very few, if any, marks of *good-
ness* discoverable, in the present consti-
tution of things. It is easy to demon-
strate the folly of such *precise* suggestions,
which are so injurious to God, and dis-
quieting to our own minds.

FOR, FIRST, They are weak in their
very *foundation*: Since nothing can be
more absurd than to frame a judgment

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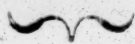
of *Human life in general*, by what we feel, or only imagine we feel, in ourselves. To make our own *real* happiness or misery the *measure* of happiness and misery with respect to all the rest of Mankind -- is to determine both against reason and experience. For as their *external circumstances* are vastly different, so are their *views*, and *dispositions*. The variety of their *natural tempers*, the influence of *education*, and the force of *acquired habits*, have always been the occasion of their affecting *different pleasures*, within the bounds of regularity and innocence. From hence it proceeds, that some look upon that condition as not only easy, but *exceedingly desirable*, to which others have the *strongest aversion*: So that their notions of *Good* and *Evil* differ -- So much their *capacity* for *relishing* the one, and *supporting under* the other, as long as one part of the species continue to be what they are -- naturally *serene, composed, and chearful*; another -- *disturb'd, anxious, and desponding*; and a third -- *resemble* both of these by turns, being in their tempers *capricious* and *variable*. Upon these accounts it is absolutely

lutely impossible, that all Mankind should feel *equal degrees* of pleasure or pain, if their *outward circumstances* were exactly the same: And, on the other hand, as these are almost infinitely *various*, some would of necessity be *more happy* than others, even though they had all the same *dispositions*. But notwithstanding that the justness and strength of this reasoning is so clear and obvious to common sense, yet when a spirit of *discontent* has once taken possession, and irritated and ruffled mens minds, they are easily led to form an idea of Human life *upon the whole*, from a *single* uncomfortable instance; and to judge of the rest of their Fellow-creatures from their own *groundless suspicions*, and *extremes of passion*.

NAY, If a man has run through all the degrees of *intemperance*, and by excessive gratifications of this kind nature is *exhausted* and *weakened*, and the appetites are in a great measure *pall'd*; when he is thus convinc'd by experience of the *vanity* of *irregular* pleasures, and his reviews of the disorders of his past life grow *uneasy* to him; in short, when he has

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taken a *surfeit* of luxury and sensual debauches, and feels the ill consequences of such licentious courses in *-languid* spirits, and a *shatter'd* constitution: Or, if by his own *negligence* and *indiscretion* he has plung'd himself into inconveniencies and difficulties, which by care and a prudent management might have been avoided--In both these cases, the Evils which he suffers are exaggerated; and instead of making proper reflections on the *rashness* and *wickedness* of his conduct, he employs himself in *abusing* and *villifying* Human life in general, as full of vexations and disappointments; and in these fits of *impatience*, the *natural state* of things is quite perverted and turn'd upside down, and happy is he esteem'd *who hath not yet been*, to *see the evil--under the sun*--But why should persons, who have acted so *irregularly*, imagine *the rest of the World* to be as miserable as they are? Are *all* thoughtless and inconsiderate, or abandon'd to an extravagant sensuality? If *not*, and the slightest observation will convince us that they *are not*; why should it be presum'd, that they suffer those calamities, which
are

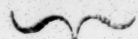
are universally seen to be the natural S E R M.
effects of inadvertency or intemperance? XIII.

Again, are they all *equally* imprudent or dissolute in their behaviour? The contrary is capable of as clear and undeniable proof, as any matter of fact will admit of: Why then should their misery be supposed to be *equal*? No way of arguing can be more weak and preposterous, than to infer the *universal* and *necessary* misery of Mankind from *accidental* evils, which spring from *special* causes, and a *particular* conjuncture of circumstances: And, consequently, all the objections against the *goodness* and *desirableness* of Human life, that are built on this false reasoning, must be weak and groundless.

NAY farther, it frequently happens, that men are *uneasy* with their own condition, and *fretted* at the general state of the World, when their circumstances are in truth very *agreeable*. The reason of which is, that their notions of happiness are not founded in *nature*, but in passion, and fancy, and a perverted judgment. They are out of conceit with *Life*, not because they have any *good reason* to
find

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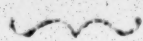
find fault with it, but from a *childish disgust* which they have conceiv'd against it, for not being so contriv'd and modell'd as to square with their *exorbitant* views, and the *romantick* schemes with which they have amus'd themselves; or from mere *inquietude* and *inconstancy* of mind. And indeed *no possible* state of things can be thought to be wisely order'd, if *peevishness* and *passion* are left to determine, which are never calm and sedate enough to form a *fair* and *impartial* estimate. Let us, in our imagination, *alter* the World in what manner we please--as long as we have no fix'd and inviolable rule of reason to proceed by, but are guided entirely by fickleness of temper, and corrupt inclinations, *cavils* will be infinite and endless. If we were to put the case, that a *universal affluence* and *plenty* prevail'd; a man of an *impatient* spirit wou'd be apt to take offence because all were set upon a *level*, and he himself was not treated with that *distinction*, which he might think necessary to *reward* his *merit*, but more properly to *sooth* his *pride*. And for the same cause, while things remain

main in their *present* situation, let him have honours to flatter his ambition, and riches to gratify his covetousness; yet while there are *more eminent degrees* of either, which *others* are possessed of, it is not at all likely that he will be *easy* with his condition, or set bounds to his inordinate desires. For *peevishness* is insatiable; a *sullen nature* cannot easily be obliged; and where there is a rivetted and inveterate *gloom*, it will cast a shade over the bright part of life, and find, in *all* objects, some ground for discontent. So that *invectives* against the *vanity* and *misery* of the world, that come from this quarter, must be look'd upon only as the result of a disorder'd imagination, and not as the dictates of right reason and truth.

To all which I may add, that when men are of a *restless* and *repining* temper, it is impossible, that they should maintain a reverent and humble *submission* to Providence. On the contrary, by reproaching the *Creation* of God, they derogate from His essential wisdom and goodness; and being displeas'd with their Maker, with themselves, and with all Mankind,
they

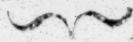
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they must of necessity, in so *soure* and ill a humour, be *indisposed* for acts of humanity and mercy, for the soft, condescending, endearing, and beneficent offices of *social Life*. Thus it appears, that when it is *the language of discontent*, *Solomon's* assertion in the text has a great deal of weakness, perverseness, and guilt in it, *viz.* That *the day of Death* is better than *the day of ones Birth*. Let us proceed,

SECONDLY, To consider it in another light, as *the language of a Sceptick*, inclined to cavil, and find fault with the present Constitution-- It may perhaps be imagined, that this character is improperly introduced; because persons of a *sceptical* or *infidel* turn are most likely to be *fond of life*, and set a high value on the enjoyments of it. Those who doubt of, or disbelieve, a Providence, have no notion of a future existence; and must therefore confine all their pleasures, hopes, and prospects, to the *present scene*. And can it be thought, that while they enjoy a competent share of health and pleasure,



pleasure, they will be willing to exchange it for a state of *non-existence*, of utter *darkness* and *insensibility*? Or, consequently, that they can believe it to be absolutely *a true* proposition, that *the day of Death* is better than *the day of ones Birth*?-- This, it must be allow'd, is in general very *improbable* : But Men are not always so *consistent* with themselves, but that they may be supposed to urge (when outward appearances are specious and plausible) principles which they *do not thoroughly believe*, against the truth of other principles, which they *have a strong inclination to subvert*. Besides, if one *sceptically* inclin'd be of a *sour melancholly* temper ; if he is dispos'd neither to give nor take *pleasure*, but to criticise with *spleen* and *severity*, and censure with *malice* ; if he has *no relish* for entertainments of vanity and luxury, or, the vigour of his constitution being abated, finds himself *unable* to continue his former excesses ; it will be no wonder, if in these circumstances, he urges -- the present constitution of things which he thinks of with *indifference* and *contempt*, and feels

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to be *inconvenient* and *troublesome* -- and the miseries of Mankind which are *aggravated* by his ill-nature -- against the Being of a God, or the justice and goodness of his Providential Government. Nay, he may perhaps look on this as one of the *strong holds* of *unbelief*; because if this state is the *whole* of Man's Being, and yet is *worse* than *non-existence*, to force it upon any without their own consent must be a tyrannical act of cruelty. And thus not only will the foundations of *Christianity* be undermin'd, but of *natural Religion* likewise; and Mankind will be entirely discharged from the Obligation of *Divine* Laws, and all sense of *supreme moral* government.---It is easy to see, how the carrying this grand point of infidelity will support the cause of *Vice*; but will the Argument, *built on* Solomon's *observation*, as effectually serve the cause of *Infidelity*? This is what we are now to inquire into: And I apprehend, that I need only suggest the following hints, to demonstrate the contrary beyond all reasonable contradiction.

FIRST, That it is very unfair to argue *in this manner* against Providence, from the Miseries that *actually* attend Human Life. For the Question is *not*, whether *Men have made* the state of the World worse than *non-existence*---but how *God made* it, and how he *intended* it should be *govern'd*.---For the *far greater* part of the evils of Life, which are introduced by ourselves against the manifest *scheme* and *design* of the Creator, he is not at all *answerable*; but they must be wholly charged on the *voluntary abuse* of our faculties, and the *unnatural Excesses* of our Passions.-- And from hence it follows, that the only *sure* way to form a right judgment in this case is, to consider what the state of the World *would be*, if all its rational Inhabitants constantly followed the order of *Nature*, and the Rules prescribed by the *Author* of it. This will discover to us *God's Creation*, answering the plan of it in his infinite Mind: Every other is a *false View*, that can give us no idea of his *real Character*; because it only shews us the *corruption* and *disorder* of his Works. As therefore it is a certain Truth, confirm'd by

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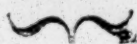
by the experience of all ages, that if Men were universally *cautious* and *prudent*, *industrious* and *frugal* -- they would probably *succeed* in most of their *reasonable* designs, and be crown'd with *prosperity*; that if they were all *just* and *generous*, and acted on the strict principles of *probity* and *honour*--*respect* and *friendship*, *peace* and *harmony*, would flourish among them, the most desirable *advantages* of civil life would be secured, and the *mischiefs* arising from treachery, oppression, discord, and violence, would be in a good measure prevented; and that if they were all *temperate* -- they must of necessity enjoy a vastly larger proportion of *health*, of *vivacity* and *strength* of mind, of *resolution* and inward *composure*; and as this appears, from their very frame and the establish'd tendency of things, to be the *course of action*, which their Creator intended they should pursue: Our reason immediately leads to this conclusion, that the *original constitution* in this lower World was admirably calculated to promote our *happiness*, and, if steadily adhered to, would render our *present situation*, upon the

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the whole, very *convenient* and *comfortable*. SERM.

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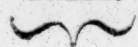


And we ourselves are, in innumerable instances, the unhappy instruments *of our own misery*; turning many fruitful parts of the earth into *desarts*; inventing various unnatural scenes of *terror* and *cruelty*; spreading *slavery* and *desolation*, and a melancholy face of *distress* and *ruin*, over the most flourishing countries; invading each others most valueable *rights* and *liberties*; and, in a word, *perplexing* our own minds, while we *disturb* and *torment* our fellow-creatures. These are *none of them* to be reckoned as *the works of God*, which his hand has wrought; but they are the dreadful monuments of *Human* pride, avarice, lust of power, and other equally *unnatural* and *pernicious* vices. So that if the words of the text are considered as *a Sceptical objection*, it is most evident, that the objection is built on a complication of *false facts*, which are these -- That the *actual* condition of Man is his *natural* condition -- That both his *actual* condition, and the life for which the Creator *originally* intended him in this world, are *worse than death and annihilation* --



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That *if misery really prevails*, the frame of Nature could not have been *designed at first*, nor *wisely adapted*, to produce *happiness*--And that God is not only answerable for *his own* purposes and operations, but for the wilful irregularities and disorders of *his creatures*. I shall only add, that this objection, which has been shewn to involve so many *absurdities* in it, is *wholly* founded on a groundless and improbable presumption, that the *present* is an *entire*, *independent*, *unconnected* scene; that has no *relation* to any *future* state of Being: A presumption, that does not at all suit with the *moral*, *active*, and *vastly improvable* faculties of the mind of Man, nor, consequently, with *true Philosophy*. -- But if the proposition laid down in the text is not capable of being defended, consider'd as the dictate either of *Discontent*, or *Scepticism*, in different ways censuring and reproaching Providence; it is now natural to enquire, what is the *proper* sense in which it may be asserted--That *the day of Death* is better *than the day of our Birth*? The answer to which belongs,

To

To the THIRD and last head, where I propos'd to treat of this observation of *Solomon*, as expressing the *sentiment* of a *wise* and *good* man, form'd on *sober reflection*, and the solid principles of *Reason* and *Religion*; of the man, who neither doubts for the sake of *cavilling*, nor believes *hastily* and *without evidence*; who argues on principles that have their foundation in *Nature*, and does not depend on *subtle* and *arbitrary theories*, but on *fact* and *observation*.---Such a one, being led by the knowledge of *effects* to the belief of an eternal *First Cause*, and judging, from the amazing marks of *exquisite skill* that appear in all the parts of the Universe *which he understands*, that this great Being has ordered nothing but with a *wise* design, cannot persuade himself to entertain a *despicable* opinion of Human life upon the whole, nor look on this World as *absolutely* a *bad situation*; but, on the contrary, as both *intended*, and *fitted*, to answer some *valuable* purpose-- And when he considers the *moral* and *accountable* nature of Mankind, and the *excellent* *laws* by which they are *obliged* to

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govern their conduct in order to fulfil the end of their *creation*, he thinks it most reasonable to conclude, that they are placed *here* as in a state of *trial*; and finds upon farther reflection, that a *mixture* of good and evil, of prosperous and adverse occurrences, is most *suitable* to such a *probationary* scene. -- But then he cannot easily believe, that the merciful Father of Mankind has ordain'd that they should be afflicted with *more evils*, than are proper to serve this useful design; or that He has allotted, *universally* and *necessarily*, so *large* a share of misery, and so *few* pleasures to counter-balance it, as must raise a strong *doubt* about his own goodness -- He cannot therefore admit, that according to the *course of Nature*, and if *that* was strictly follow'd, the calamities of life would be *more* than the comforts, the difficulties than the conveniencies of it. This he sees to be a manifest contradiction to his own *experience*, and the *experience* of all ages; and, besides, such a supposition would weaken the *natural Reward* of Virtue, and indeed the *principal argument*, by which we can pretend to prove

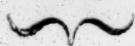


prove solidly the *difference* of moral good and evil -- which argument is this, the tendency of the former to *happiness*, and of the latter to *misery*. For if the pleasures resulting from Virtue are so trifling and inconsiderable, as that the life of man is still *worse than death and non-existence*; this must destroy the whole force of such reasoning, and render it *ridiculous*.

If then virtuous men not only *may be*, but frequently *are*, in easy and *desireable* circumstances, the question *here* recurs upon us, in what sense we are to understand these words, that *the day of Death* is better *than the day of ones Birth*? -- To which I answer, that, as a *universal maxim*, it cannot be interpreted in a way consistent with *truth* and *experience*, unless we suppose another life hereafter of more substantial and durable happiness. In some *particular instances* of *uncommon* distress, it may indeed hold strictly true without any regard to *faturity*; but in no other view can it be extended to the case of *honest* and *useful* men, enjoying the *ordinary* blessings of life and the *natural* consequences of their integrity

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and goodness, than this-- " That it is  
 " vastly more *eligible* to be safely arrived  
 " at the *end* of a well-spent life, and  
 " *enter on a much higher station* of pure  
 " and undisturbed pleasures, than to be-  
 " *gin a passage* through a World full of  
 " uncertainty; in which we are exposed  
 " to a variety of disappointments and  
 " hardships, and snares dangerous to our  
 " virtue: A World, which, when the *best*  
 " things are said of it, cannot deserve  
 " that a *wise* man should be passionately  
 " *fond* of it, or *center* his *chief* views and  
 " expectations in it."

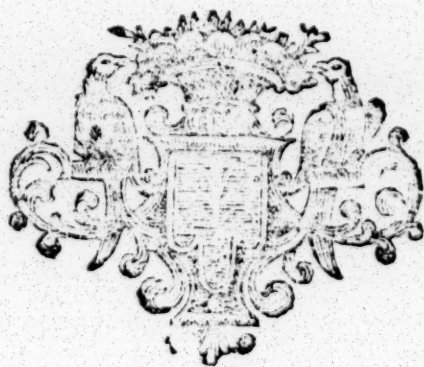
To conclude; Let not this engage our  
 thoughts barely as a *speculation*, but be  
 entertain'd as a *practical principle*, which  
 it is of the utmost importance that we  
 rightly digest, and reduce to its proper *use*.  
 Let us spend *the time of our sojourning*  
*here* in the fear of God, and a consci-  
 entious obedience to his laws. Let us  
 improve all the abilities and advantages  
 which we enjoy, in recommending and  
 supporting Religion, and promoting the  
 good of our fellow-creatures. Let our  
 whole lives be spent with honour, and a  
 uniform

*and improvement of Human life.*

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uniform steady integrity-- That in our last moments, when it is highly probable that neither *passion* will blind, nor *peevish resentment* mislead us, nor a *superficial scepticism* yield us any real satisfaction; I say, that in this special exigency of Nature, when things are likely to appear in their proper colours, and strip'd of all *disguises*; we may be able, upon the review of a conduct conformable to the rules of virtue, to apply to our own case the words of the text, that *the day of Death* is better to us *than the day of our Birth*-- through the *hope of eternal life*, Tit. i. 2. which God who cannot lie hath promised.

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S E R M O N XIV.



The kingdom of God under the dispensation of the gospel, not an external and ritual, but a moral constitution.

ROM. XIV. 17.

*For the kingdom of God is not  
meat and drink; but righteous-  
ness, and peace, and joy in the  
Holy Ghost.*

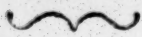
 HIS text is a most convincing and strong demonstration, that Christianity is clear and determinate, and intelligible by the lowest capacities, with respect to the *essentials* of true Religion; and that it has left no

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no room for a dispute, what is the most *important* and *substantial* part of it--by having expressly resolved it into that *moral rectitude*, that refinement and purity of mind, and integrity of life and manners, which must be eternally amiable and useful, becoming Human nature, and suited to the condition of all intelligent beings according to their various circumstances, and by the immutable order of things, the only foundation of true honour and happiness. So that we may certainly conclude, that all those points in the Christian revelation, which have any considerable degree of *intricacy* and *darkness* attending them, are of *inferior* moment; and cannot be *necessarily* connected with the great and ultimate end of religion, or determine the state of Mankind with relation to the favour of God.

BUT what a vastly *different* idea of religion have the *corrupters* of Christianity exhibited, from that *rational* and *beautiful* scheme, which was given by the *first preachers* of it! How wofully have they *changed* and *disfigured* its *original* fair and lovely complexion, so that scarce any  
traces



*of the kingdom of God.*

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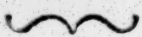
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traces of it appear! -- *The kingdom of God* in *Popish* countries is -- *fasting, going Pilgrimages, sprinkling with pretended holy-water, bowing and cringing to crucifixes;* which have no more relation to *real virtue*, and the *salvation* of mens souls, than differences of *air, food, and climate*, or the *lineaments and features* of their faces: Nay, which is infinitely worse, it is -- *believing* against the plainest dictates of *reason*, and the fullest demonstrations of *sense*; it is -- an *indolent* or *hypocritical* unity of faith; it is -- *torturing and destroying Hereticks*, and -- a *horrid and merciless inquisition*, by which *morality* is sacrificed to a pretence of *Religion*, as infamous as *Atheism* itself. And in *Churches* that may justly boast of greater *purity*, and are happily reformed from many of the grosser errors of this antichristian and persecuting communion, *the kingdom of God* is still too much *debas'd* by unworthy and low conceptions; by being supposed to consist in *forms, and rituals, and speculations*, and the *particular constitution* of Churches, or in the *fervors* of a *mechanical devotion*-- As if the direct reverse of what *St. Paul* has

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has asserted was true; and this holy kingdom was, in its fundamental principles, really nothing else but *meat and drink*, and matters in themselves of *mere indifference*, that derive all their weight from an *arbitrary command*; in a word, a kingdom erected for the introduction and establishment of *ceremony and outward formality*, and not to promote *true goodness*, and adapted to the *passions*, instead of the *understandings and consciences* of men.

THE *kingdom of God* sometimes signifies in scripture his *universal dominion*, as He is the Author and Preserver of the immense fabrick of Nature, which is absolutely subject to his direction and controul; which both subsists, and produces all its regular and most surprising effects, according to his *original established laws*. Thus we read of *his mighty acts, and the glorious Majesty of his kingdom* -- which *ruleth over, and endureth through all generations*. It is upon this account that he is described as issuing forth *his orders* even to *inanimate creatures, that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them--whether*  
for

Pf. cxlv.

12, 13.

Jobxxxvii.

12, 13.

for correction --- or for mercy, fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfil his word; and they are all represented as his servants, because they continue to this day, according to his ordinances. But though there is a great force and elegance in these descriptions, they are plainly figurative; and this phrase, *the kingdom of God*, can have here an allusive meaning only. For in strict and just reasoning, the idea of a *Kingdom*, and of *Laws*, necessarily supposes such subjects as are endued with intelligence and moral agency, and capable of yielding a voluntary obedience. So that the *kingdom of God* most properly signifies his moral government, his empire over rational and free beings; which, in the largest and most adequate notion of it, is as extensive as the whole intellectual and moral world. And because the *Laws* of any government are its essential frame and constitution, therefore the *kingdom of God* is justly used to denote the whole of true religion; which is only another phrase for those wise rules of his moral government,

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Pf. cxlviii.  
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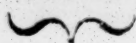
Pf. cxix.

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ment, which indispensably oblige all his subjects to whom they are *made known*.

WE may add to this, that if when the World was universally depraved, and had corrupted the true religion, when it had revolted, from its only supreme and rightful governour, to imaginary and idol Deities; if, I say, the true God was pleased graciously to interpose, to establish his own authority, which by the generality was no longer acknowledged, and revive his original laws, which were either not known, or not attended to: This *restoration of true religion*, and strong *reinforcement* of it by the *old* motives of immutable reason, and by *new* discoveries, and peculiar assistances, graciously adapted to the weakness and degeneracy of Mankind, might, in an *appropriate* and *eminent* sense, be stiled his *kingdom*: Which was shamefully dishonoured, and in a manner quite lost, in an ignorant and superstitious World; and was *only maintained* by revelation in its full dignity, with the security of all its just rights, and for the good of his rational subjects. We see, therefore, with what a natural and easy

easily propriety the state of religion, or the government of moral agents under the dispensation of the Gospel, is so frequently stiled in the New Testament *the kingdom of Heaven*, and *the kingdom of God*-- We see, why *John* the Baptist, the fore-runner of our Lord, preach'd *repentance*, because *the kingdom of Heaven* was at hand; the reformation of all evil habits and practices being, in the nature of things, the *first step* towards that refin'd and strict virtue, which the laws of this kingdom enjoin'd-- We see what our Saviour meant by that petition, in the excellent form or model of prayer which he taught his disciples-- *thy kingdom come*; to wit, "That those  
" rules of righteousness and piety, which  
" were enforced by the authority of God,  
" and absolutely necessary to be conformed  
" to in order to obtain his favour, might be  
" universally observed," that so Mankind might unite, with intelligent Beings of superior orders, in obeying the sacred will of the *common Father* of the moral *Universe*-- We see likewise the true reason, why Christ himself has declared elsewhere, that *whoever shall not receive the kingdom*  
*dom*

Matt. iii.  
2.

Matt. vi.  
10.

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Mark x.

15.

*dom of God as a little child, i.e. with humility, openness, and simplicity of heart, he shall not enter therein; because these excellent dispositions are the necessary foundation of all proficiency in Divine Knowledge, and improvement in Virtue.*

EACH of these passages enables us to frame a distinct and clear idea of the *kingdom of God* spoken of in the text; of which the Apostle has given this just and noble description, that it is *not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*--That the *joy* here mentioned denotes something of a *Moral* nature, which is, *at all times*, as *fitly* required of us, as an observation of the rules of *Righteousness* and *Peace*, may be fairly inferr'd from the *general form* of the proposition itself, which intimates no *distinction*. And there is the greater probability of this, because *St. Paul* has, elsewhere, exhorted Christians to *rejoice evermore*; and has expressly inserted *joy* in the same catalogue with--*love, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and temperance*, which are *all* unquestionable branches

1 Thess.  
v. 16.

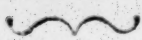
Gal. v.  
22, 23.



branches of *Morality*. But there is another circumstance much more material, and, I think, strictly *decisive*: For the words, immediately following the text, represent *this joy* to be a part of the *service* which we owe to *Christ*-- of that religious *service*, which will not only recommend us to the *favour* of *God*, but, as it agrees with the sentiments of *natural reason*, must render us  *approv'd of Men*. It cannot, therefore, with any propriety be applied to *accidental* and *involuntary* sensations, or to those in which we are entirely *passive*; but must be restrain'd to some disposition and habit of mind, which it *is in our own power* to raise and cultivate. And, thus consider'd, it may aptly denote -- *alacrity and delight in virtue*, and in obeying the wise and equitable commands of *God*. Or else, if we accommodate the whole to that *particular case*, upon which *St. Paul* was then giving his judgment, we must suppose that he inculcated *righteousness*, in opposition to *offence* and *injury*; *peace*, in opposition to *discord*, and *angry contention* about *meats* and *drinks*, and other matters of *indifference*: And *joy* must stand opposed to the *grief*

S E R M.

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mentioned in the 15th verse -- *But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably; and so it will signify -- delight in doing good, and in using our constant endeavours to diffuse and render that joy universal, which the Christian religion naturally inspires. I shall only add, that we are under no necessity of confining the words, in, or by, or through [the energy and influence of] the Holy Ghost, to joy; because they may, both in reason, and as they stand in the text itself, be equally connected with righteousness and peace. So that the whole of what the Apostle has asserted will admit of this easy paraphrase, that “ the kingdom of God, with respect “ to its essential frame, is not meat and “ drink, nor any thing merely external and “ and ritual; but righteousness, peace, and “ joy, and, upon the same foundation, “ all those other moral virtues, which “ are the fruit of the Spirit.”* The only difficulty that occurs in this passage being now removed, I proceed to make a few natural remarks upon it.

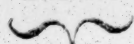
Gal. v. 22

AND my FIRST observation is this, that the *less* religion is encumber'd by observance

vances of an *external* nature, it is by *so much the more* perfect. By *external observances*, I mean *rites and usages* that are in their own nature *indifferent*; and which, when they are not introduced and sanctified by a *superstitious fancy*, can only have a *relative or typical* holiness; but no *natural and invariable connection* with the substantial principles and duties of religion. And that true religion is always, *in proportion*, more *excellent*, the *less* of this kind it has interwoven and blended with it, is surely a very just and fair inference from the text: For it is only asserting in other terms, that the *more strictly* the kingdom of God is confined to its *essential* laws and constitution, and the *more nearly* religion is conformed to the *eternal* standard of *Reason*, and the *original* rules of *Christianity*, it is both *more* lovely and venerable in itself, and more useful to Mankind.

ALL *ceremonious trappings*, and *symbolical Mysteries* in religion, have ever had their foundation in the *weakness, corruption*, and *false taste* of the generality of the World. They are annexed to *false*



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religions, to *amuse* the easily-astonish'd and credulous multitude, and, by an outward shew of *magnificence* and *solemnity*, so to engage and captivate the *senses*, that *Reason* shall have nothing to do; which, if it was not blinded by an outward *glare*, and a constant strong address to the *Passions*, would be apt to dive too deep into the imposture. And when a *pompous service*, and a numerous train of *Rituals*, have been *wisely* enjoin'd, it was only for this reason, because the people were bigotted to *superstition*, and enslav'd to *low* imaginations; and would have renounced the worship of the true God altogether, and have fallen in with the most stupid and barbarous of the neighbouring idolatries, if they had not been *indulg'd* with an *innocent* ceremonious religion of their own, and kept under *discipline* by separating and discriminating laws. St. *Paul* has therefore described the *Mosaick* law of *Rituals*, (though it was *wisely* adapted to the genius and circumstances of the *Jewish* nation) under the most debasing and contemptible images, such as *carnal ordinances imposed until the time of*

of reformation---weak and beggarly elements, and the like; and has represented the Deity as considering this people in the quality of *Minors*, whom it was necessary to keep, in their *infant* state, in *bondage under the elements of the world*: The true meaning of which representation is this, that because they could not digest the *rational* religion of *Men* pure and unalloy'd, it was dress'd up, figur'd, and adorned, to suit it to their *childish* prejudices; because they would not be influenced by the *simplicity* of naked truth and virtue, they were govern'd and kept in order by *authority*, and their *senses* were engaged to assist and supply the *weakness* of *reason*. All which, though it was *justly* directed in such an irregular situation and state of things, is an undeniable proof of the *imperfection* of their religious constitution consider'd *in itself*, and that Christianity, which has *abolish'd the law of commandments* contained in *ordinances*, and reduced religion to its primitive rectitude--is much more *excellent* in its own nature, and more *beneficial* in its consequences.

SERMON.  
XIV.  
HISTORICAL  
CANTON.  
— 1733

SERM. THE more any religion has in it of *in-*  
 XIV. *trinsic* and *immutable* goodness, not a-  
 rising from *mere authority*, or the *acci-*  
*dental corruptions* and *necessities* of par-  
 ticular times, but from principles of *eter-*  
*nal* reason, it must, in the nature of the  
 thing, be *so much the more* perfect. For  
 this, in truth, is only expressing the self-  
 same idea by different terms, and amounts  
 to no more than this self-evident propo-  
 sition--That whatever is *best* in itself is  
*most excellent* and *complete* in itself. But  
 mere *external observances* have nothing in  
 them of *natural* and *unalterable* goodness;  
 and, consequently, it must be the *biggest*  
*perfection* of every religion to be separated  
 as much *as possible*, and as the circum-  
 stances of an unthinking and degenerate  
 World will allow, from all such *inferior*  
 and *adulterate mixtures*.

AGAIN, that Religion must of neces-  
 sity be the *most excellent*, which is com-  
 posed, and consists mainly, of such Du-  
 ties, as by their *own Importance* and *Worth*  
 will render Mankind *pleasing* and *accepta-*  
*ble* to God, the *proper* and *suitable* Objects  
 of his *Favour*. But *external rites* and  
*forms*

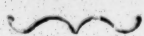


forms can, in themselves, be of *no* significance with an infinitely wise and holy Being; and therefore a Worship that is not *encumbered* with them (as the Christian is not) and which admits of nothing of a *positive* nature, any farther than the general, and almost incurable, weakness and inattention of the World demand, must be *most* *worthy* our regard and veneration.

I SHALL only add, that that Scheme of Religion is in its frame and constitution *most* *perfect*, which is *least* *liable* to the extravagant and pernicious abuses of *superstition* and *enthusiasm*. And what must that be? Why surely a Religion of *internal rectitude* and *goodness*; in which there is scarce a possible foundation, on which to raise an enthusiastick and superstitious structure.---- But *Ceremonies* may be used as *charms*, and *commutations* for a virtuous life, or as *atonements* for immoralities; and, consequently, by ignorance in some, and craft in others, and corruption and dishonesty of heart in the generality, they may be easily turn'd to *undermine* and *destroy* all that is *valuable* and *useful* in religion.

S E R M.

XIV.

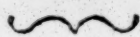


IT may not be amiss to remark here, since it arises naturally from the subject of this discourse, and St. Paul's representation of it -- that the *kingdom of God* differs widely from the constitution of all *civil* governments -- In its *laws*, which extend to the *habits* and *affections* of the *mind*; whereas the exercise of civil authority must be confined to the *outward actions* -- In the *sanctions* by which its laws are supported, which are chiefly *future* rewards and punishments; whereas the observation of Human injunctions, consider'd as *such*, can only be enforce'd by *present* and *temporal* motives -- And in the *ultimate end* of government, which, in the kingdom of God, is the *moral perfection* and *supreme happiness* of its intelligent subjects; but, in civil politics, only the preservation of *publick order*, and the security of the *natural* and *social* rights of mankind. So that he, who by a strict regard to justice, and a regular *outward* conduct, proves himself to be, beyond *censure*, a *good member* of the civil community to which he belongs, and deserves upon that account esteem and praise, may  
be,

be, at the same time, a *disorderly* and *rebellious subject* of the kingdom of God, and justly intitled to disgrace and punishment. --- From whence it evidently follows, that RELIGION, *as such*, cannot be the *proper subject* of *political laws*. For what is *Religion* but the practice of universal virtue, and cultivating the *inward* habits of virtue, from a *conscientious* regard to the Divine authority? -- And are civil governments qualify'd and empower'd to try and judge the *conscience*! -- This is too absurd to be maintain'd. But certain it is, that *laws* can be of no weight, if cognizance cannot be taken of *offences*: And, therefore, the institutions of civil society may as easily be extended to all the *inward sentiments* and *speculations* of men, whether relating to philosophy, trade, private oeconomy, or any other the most indifferent subjects -- as they can be to *Religion*, which is a principle seated in the *heart*. All that such laws can be supposed to do is, to enjoin *one* outward *profession* and *form* of Religion: But if this order was universally complied with, it might have no manner of *connection* with  
the

S E R M.

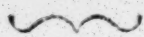
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the advancement of *Religion itself*; because men may openly *profess* what they do not *believe*, and *submit* to forms which they do not *approve of*. Nay the belief and worship, *prescribed* by publick authority, may be dishonourable, hurtful, *destructive* to religion: And that such presumptuous, enslaving, and *unnatural* impositions will either *convince* the *judgment*, or *purify* the *conscience*, is absolutely improbable; that they are directly adapted to *increase* the number of *false* and *hypocritical* professors -- subtle *Politicians* need not to be told, who see that *their own ends* are completely served by it. Allow me to demonstrate, that civil authority cannot, in any proper sense, extend to *Religion*, by suggesting one consideration more; and that is, that it must appear extremely *ridiculous*, if instead of being contented with appointing *external professions and forms* (which is a power it has often usurp'd) and enjoining *outward acts* of social virtue (which is a power it may justly claim) it was to frame its laws in *this strain*—

“ That men, in order to their being entitled to the COMMON PRIVILEGES and BENEFITS OF SOCIETY, shall attend

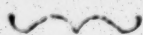
“ the

“ the publick worship of God from a SINCERE DEVOTION, and an UNFEIGNED REVERENCE and LOVE of the Deity ;” and likewise, “ That in order to the being considered and treated as GOOD SUBJECTS, they shall be just, charitable, and sober, from RIGHT principles, and the INWARD TEMPER of justice, benevolence, and sobriety ?”

THE SECOND observation which I would make from the text is, that *no differences* about such things, as are expressly declared *not* to belong to the *essence* of religion, can, in the nature of the differences themselves, be *inconsistent* with religion. They may be inconsistent with some of the *outworks*, with some of the *remote doctrines*, some of the *extraneous guards* and *fences* of religion ; but not with religion, as it is the *means* of recommending Mankind to the *favour* and *acceptance* of God ; because *this* must be *wholly* comprehended in its *essential principles* and duties. For if the *essential* principles and duties of Religion are not the *whole* of it, so far as it is *necessary* to our eternal salvation, it will then follow, that some things may be *necessary*.

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*say*, that are not *essential*, parts of Religion; which is an absurdity even to common sense. But, on the contrary, if all the *essential* branches of Religion, are likewise all the *necessary* branches of Religion, then the consequence is most plainly what I before proposed, *viz.* that no *difference* about *other* matters, of a quite *distinct* consideration, can, in the nature of the thing itself, be *inconsistent* with Religion.--- And what is St. Paul's account of the *essence* of true Religion? It stands thus; that it is *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*; or the practice of *these*, and, upon the same foundation of truth and equity, of *all other virtues*, as *loves* of the kingdom of God, from a due esteem of his infinite perfections, and regard to his supreme authority.

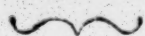
SHOULD it be said, that this is indeed a just representation of the substance of *Natural Religion*; but that *Christianity* is a more spiritual and exalted institution, which has proposed several *new essential doctrines* to be believed, and several *new essential duties* to be practised --- I answer, that I would by no means detract from the respect



respect and veneration that ought to be paid to the Christian Revelation, the *peculiar prerogatives and excellencies* of which, I think it both my duty and honour to assert and vindicate; and therefore I readily allow, that it has *improved* Natural Religion to its utmost perfection, and urged and enforced the practice of it, not only from the *common principles* of reason, but by *additional motives*, which it was worthy of God to propose, as they are fitted to influence his intelligent creatures. But, notwithstanding this, I cannot apprehend, that there is any weight in the objection.--- For (1<sup>st</sup>) the *kingdom of God*, in the writings of St. Paul, never signifies *mere natural Religion*, but always the *rules and scheme* of God's moral government, as they are *explain'd* in the *doctrine* of Christ and his Apostles.---However, if we should admit, without any apparent ground for it, that it means in the text the kingdom of God *in general*; even then, the least that can be included in it must be this, that such things as the Apostle here mentions are *immutably*, in all ages and under every dispensation, the *essential constitution* of God's moral govern-

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government: For it is impossible, that that could with any propriety be asserted *absolutely* and *in general*, which only held true in *one particular instance*, and an instance, supposed by the objector himself to be, the *lowest* and *most imperfect*. If therefore those virtues, in which consists *invariably* the *essence* of the kingdom of God, be not likewise the *essence* of Christianity; or if Christianity has any *essentials* besides these; this consequence must certainly follow, that even upon St. Paul's principles---the Christian Religion, and the Kingdom of God, are ideas *essentially different*. But St. Paul was too just and consistent a reasoner, to afford the premises for so absurd a conclusion: Nay, we can prove almost to a demonstration, that his meaning was quite the reverse. For he has plainly declared that the exercise of *righteousness* and *peace* (and the other virtues inseparably connected with these) is SERVING CHRIST; and that *he*, who in *these things* SERVETH CHRIST, is ACCEPTABLE to God. --- And if there be any *force*, or indeed any *sense*, in the expressions here used, they must imply thus much---that such a one is a *real Christian*, what-

Rom. XIV  
18.

whatever *errors* he may fall into even in points of *some importance*, and will continue to be so, as long as his *mistakes* are consistent with *integrity*, and *true goodness*; and, as one that answers the main and ultimate end of the Gospel, will be *accepted of God*; and, as one who is in favour with God, ought of course to be *approved of* by men, especially by his Christian brethren, as a *fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God*.---Let us then consider this as the only *sure test* of our common Christianity, and the *center and bond* of Christian communion\*.

Eph. ii.  
19.

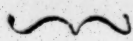
\* In the whole of this discourse (and that the reader must plainly see) I consider Christianity not only as a Divine revelation, but as *received and acknowledged* under that character; as St. Paul, in the words of the text, addressed himself not to *Infidels*, but to those who had *embraced* the Religion of the Gospel. I have therefore only been inquiring, what things are *essentially necessary* to denominate that Man to be a *true Christian*, who makes an outward *profession of faith* in Christ; which faith the very name of a Christian supposes. And in this sense I desire to be understood, when I speak of *the essence*, or *the essentials*, of Christianity. It is one thing -- what is *necessary* to a Man's becoming a Christian; but a quite distinct point -- what is *necessary* to intitle him to the privileges and blessings annexed to that character, who is *already a Christian* in belief and profession. The latter of these alone the text, and my argument built upon it, have led me to consider, and the former is entirely out of the question.

SEVENTH



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SEVERAL other remarks will readily occur to us, on reading the passage of *St. Paul* which I have chosen for the subject of this discourse; but as I have not time to expatiate, I shall content myself with just mentioning one observation more --- The Apostle hath wisely asserted, that *he who serveth Christ*, by the strict and constant practice of the *unchangeable* and *essential* duties of Religion, is *approved of men*, as well as *acceptable to God*: By which is meant, that he not only *actually enjoys*, but is *justly entitled to*, esteem and respect from his fellow-creatures. And as *contraries* will naturally produce *contrary* effects, *St. Paul* has by this strongly intimated it to be his opinion, “ That the  
 “ being exact and rigorous in *Rituals*, but  
 “ defective in *Morals*, and laying more  
 “ stress on outward *forms*, than on the in-  
 “ ward habits of *righteousness* and good-  
 “ ness, is the most effectual method that  
 “ can be taken to expose *ourselves*, and the  
 “ Religion which we thus dishonour, to  
 “ the *disapprobation* and *contempt* of all  
 “ the confederate and unprejudiced part  
 “ of mankind.” Of which the history of  
 every

every age, and the multitude of *Infidels* who have started up on this very pretence, afford too clear and sad a proof.

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LET us therefore endeavour, as much as in us lies, to wipe off this aspersions from our *holy faith*. --- In order to which, it is absolutely necessary that we avoid the extreme of *Superstition*, which is the parent of *ceremoniousness*; of a *tinsel piety*, consisting in *gaudy trifles*; and of infinite *unavailing tricks* to appease, sooth, or flatter a supposed *resentful*, but *capricious*, Deity. -- And while we are careful to pay a becoming regard to the *positive* precepts of our religion, as they are enjoined by the authority of God to whom all obedience is due, and admirably calculated to improve our virtues; we must always remember to allow the *chief* place to the *weightier matters of the law*, *i. e.* to those *natural* and *indispensable* duties, which (as has been before observed) will *eternally* oblige every *rational* Being in the Universe, and are the *immediate* and *only* supports of *Moral* order, rectitude, and happiness.

Matth.  
xxiii. 23.







## S E R M O N   X V .



Universal Charity the essence and  
life of religion.

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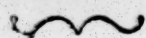
I C O R. xiii. 3.

*And though I bestow all my goods  
to feed the poor, and though I  
give my body to be burned, and  
have not charity, it profiteth  
me nothing.*

**B**Y the Charity which St. Paul S E R M .  
X V .  
~  
here speaks of, and has so large-  
ly and admirably described in  
this chapter, is meant that Godlike prin-  
ciple of Benevolence and Love to Man-  
kind,

SERM.

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kind, which has its root so deep in the frame of Human Nature, that it cannot be eradicated without *distorting* it, and offering *violence* to its Faculties and Instincts; which the *Relations* that we bear to each other strongly plead for; and which is the *universal Spirit* ordained to *animate* the moral World, and to be the *Cement* and *Prop* of Society. That this was what the Apostle had in view, will admit of no dispute, when we have examined his own account of it, and of the *Characteristick marks* by which it may be known, in the verses immediately following the text. --- *Charity*, says he, *suffereth long*, and *is kind*; *Charity envieth not*; *Charity vaunteth not itself*, *is not puffed up*, *doth not behave itself unseemly*, *seeketh not her own*, *is not easily provoked*, *thinketh no evil*, *rejoiceth not in iniquity*, *but rejoiceth in the truth*, *beareth all things*, *believeth all things*, *hopeth all things*, *endureth all things*.

THIS refined and exalted principle, every one of the least reflection must see to be inseparably connected with the idea of *true Religion*, and of the first rank  
among

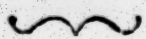
among *Moral Virtues*.--- Where there is not *Benevolence* to Men, it is absolutely impossible that there should be a sincere *Piety* towards GOD: Either a just regard to his *Natural Laws*; or a grateful veneration and acknowledgment of his *Universal Goodness*; or a becoming sense of his *wise* and *gracious* design in those soft and kind affections, those tender feelings of compassion, by which he hath distinguished and *enabled* our frame. For how can we *honour* him, whose *Authority* we directly oppose; whose *Creatures* we despise; whose *Example* we refuse to imitate? Or devoutly reverence and adore his *Wisdom*, when we contradict the *principal End*, to which he has *adapted* our inward *Moral Constitution*? ---- Again, Where *Benevolence* is wanting, it is absurd to expect the uninterrupted and impartial exercise of *Justice*. For why should they pay a scrupulous regard to the *Rights* of others, who have no concern for their *Happiness*? Upon what principle (I mean a *sure* and *steady* principle) can the *first* of these be maintained, if the *last* be extinguished? *Self-interest*,

S E R M.  
XV.



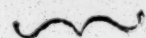
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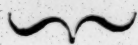
indeed, and *worldly prudence* may incline a Man, who has but little humanity and friendliness, and nothing of generosity, in his temper, to preserve a fair shew of *Equity* in his *publick* dealings, and avoid *notorious* instances of *fraud*: But what can be a *check* upon him, if he thinks that his *reputation* is safe, and his honesty unsuspected? What can *restrain* him from practising fraud and oppression *in secret*; when he imagines that he is hid within a *close disguise*, and that his base and iniquitous conduct is likely to escape the *censure* of the World, and the *cognizance* of Human Laws? There is nothing of this kind that a *selfish* spirit is not capable of; it cannot be trusted *out of sight*, nor deserve to have any degree of *confidence* reposed in it: And as for its *seemingly equitable* behaviour, in cases that are conspicuous and lie more open to publick view, even *this*, if Moral Actions are fairly weigh'd, cannot pass for *justice*, but must be look'd upon as the effect of *art* and *policy*; as being honest from *necessity*, and not out of *choice*. And as, *without Benevolence*, it is scarce possible that there  
 should

should be either *Piety*, or *Justice*,---it is  
equally absurd to imagine, that there can  
be a strict course of *Sobriety* and *Tem-*  
*perance*. For it is unquestionably plain,  
from the very nature of things and com-  
mon experience, that the principle of  
*Universal Charity* is one of the surest  
guards we have against the encroach-  
ments of licentious appetites. The Man  
who is animated by a warm and lively  
sense of *social virtue* can allow himself  
in no pursuits, which are repugnant to  
the good of *Society*: Nor can he, who  
*sincerely loves* his neighbour, consent to  
the gratification of those irregular desires,  
that interfere with *his peace*, and *honour*.  
But if he has nothing of a *publick spirit*,  
no prevailing *humanity* and *goodness* in  
his disposition,---*Corrupt Inclinations* must  
have a *large scope*, in which to exert them-  
selves,---*Pride* and *Envy* will possess and  
torment him,---And *inward order* and  
*government* will be destroyed, to intro-  
duce that deplorable state of *confusion* and  
*anarchy*, which always attends uncon-  
trolled and tumultuous Passions.

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THESE reflections are directly suited to the *reason* and *design* of St. Paul's observation in the text, and help us to see the *true ground* on which it rests. For since it appears, that a *charitable* and *benevolent* temper is the necessary support of all rational *Religion*, the chief security of the universal and mutual *rights* of Mankind, an effectual check to the powerful and baneful influence of *loose desires*, and, in short, that there can be no safe *commerce*, no agreeable *society*, no real *virtue*, but what is either *built* on *this* as its foundation, or closely and nearly *allied* to it; we can no longer wonder at the *peculiar stress* which the Apostle has laid upon it, nor at that *uncommon strength* and *emphasis* with which he expresses himself, when he says, --- *Though I speak with the tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gifts of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing.--- And though I bestow all*  
*my*



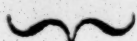
*my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not Clarity, it profiteth me nothing.*

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THE two first of these passages are easily apprehended.---- But in the text, there seem to be considerable *difficulties*, that want to be resolved. For can it be supposed, that a man may be *liberal* and *helpful* to his Fellow-creatures, to such an *extraordinary* degree as is here represented, without the inward Habits of *Benevolence* and *Goodness*? Or is it conceivable, that he should *voluntarily suffer Death* for asserting the Truth and Excellence of Religion, and at the same time be *deficient* in a most important and essential Branch of *Morality*? The World are apt to appropriate the name of *Charity* to expressions of Munificence and Bounty to the Distressed and Indigent; they look upon a person's *expending his worldly Goods*, of which the Generality are fordidly tenacious, as the most substantial proof that can be given of a *kind* and *friendly* Disposition, and a strong sense of *Humanity*: And to lay down our lives in Defence of Religion affords the clearest presumption  
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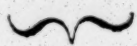
in nature of our *Resolution* and *Integrity*. How then is it to be imagined, that these things can ever be performed, where the true Spirit, or any of the necessary Principles, of *Virtue* are wanting? These may appear to be *perplex'd* and *intricate* Problems, that are very hard to be *rationaly* explained. I shall therefore endeavour to render them thoroughly intelligible, and set them in a proper light; because the having a right idea of the Apostle's *Design* is absolutely necessary, in order to our making just observations upon what he has advanced, for the Improvement of our Minds, and the better regulation of our Behaviour.

SOME have thought, that St. *Paul*, in this passage, has only *supposed* a Case, without determining either that it ever *did*, or ever *will*, or *can* happen; with a view to impress on the minds of the *Corinthians*, with greater force, a due sense of the sublime nature, and universal unchangeable obligation of the Divine Virtue of Charity. So that what he says amounts to no more than this, " That *if it was*  
" *possible* for a Man, destitute of this ex-  
" cellent

“cellent quality, to *bestow* all his Goods  
 “to feed the Poor, and give his Body to be  
 “burned, all this *seeming* Generosity and  
 “heroick Virtue would be insufficient to  
 “recommend him to the Acceptance and  
 “Favour of God.” And indeed it must  
 be owned, that such *fictitious* Cases occur  
 both in Scripture, and in the Writings of  
 the most celebrated Human Moralists;  
 and are very allowable in point of *Pro-*  
*priety* and *strict Reasoning*, since they  
 shew an Argument in the *utmost force*,  
 that *Imagination* can represent it in: And  
 if it holds good, when it is thus aggra-  
 vated, and painted in the strongest colours,  
 it must be much more conclusive in the  
*lesser* Instances, that happen in *real Life*.  
 Nay, I will make no scruple to grant fur-  
 ther, that this phrase, of *bestowing* all our  
*Goods to feed the Poor*, might be designed  
 to convey no other Idea than that of a  
*large* and *generous* Liberality: But with  
 this single Limitation, what St. Paul has  
 supposed, for any thing that appears to  
 the contrary either in reason or experi-  
 ence, may *actually* happen. For,

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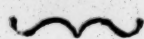


FIRST,



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FIRST, A Man may *expend a great deal* both in publick and private *Benefactions*, and yet be destitute of that mild and gracious spirit of *Benevolence* and *Charity* to his Fellow-creatures, which Christianity so warmly and earnestly inculcates: He may want, notwithstanding this glittering Shew and Pomp of *Munificence*, some of the principal and most necessary *Ingredients* of Charity; or cultivate such Habits, and entertain himself with such Prospects and Pursuits, as are directly *inconsistent* with it. There are several views, in which the *Possibility* of the Case that I have now put will be clear beyond exception.— Let us imagine a Person, then, to be *naturally* of a kind, communicative, and generous Disposition; and if it be found that such a one, following the friendly Biass of his *Constitution*, and *innate* Propensities, in supporting and providing for those who are in want, may still be defective with respect to the genuine Temper, and many of the most important Offices, of *Charity*, the point in Debate must be look'd upon as fully determined; and there are few Cases, besides, that can be

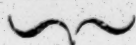
be attended with any considerable Difficulty. Now this will appear to be very *possible* upon stating the matter fairly ; of which the following is a true and just representation. A Man who has *native* openness of Heart, and the seeds of Generosity and Compassion plentifully sown in *his very Make*, will of course comply with every soft and good-natured suggestion, and indulge a sense of Humanity, as long as *Nature* is allowed to operate regularly, and is not obstructed, or turn'd aside from its proper biafs, by some *other Principle* of superior strength and influence. But when irregular Passions, of a *narrow and contracted* quality, and *mischievous* in their consequences, bear sway ; or any private views are fondly and intensely pursued, which are repugnant to *the Good of others* ; these will of necessity destroy the Exercise of *Charity* in the *particular Instances* in which they prevail, though it may discover itself, in a manner that seems unconstrained and officious, in *other Cases*, where there is no corrupt Inclination to *suspend* or *controul* its Impulse and Energy. Thus it may happen, that a

Person



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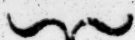
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Person may be quite clear from the base and sordid taint of *Covetousness*, and, having nothing to check his *natural Generosity*, may be *liberal* almost to *Profuseness*; and yet, at the same time, he may be of a *suspicious*, or *revengeful*, of a *proud*, or *envious* Temper: And his *Suspensions* may make him harsh in his Censures; his *Pride* may induce him to be domineering and insolent; his *Envy* may lead him to Detraction and Calumny, and infamous undermining Arts; and his habit of *Revenge* may inspire implacable Resentment and Cruelty.----And if this be his unhappy State, it is a most obvious and certain Truth, that though he *bestows all his Goods to feed the Poor*,---He *has not Charity*.

THERE are several other Cases that I need but just mention, in which the *Supposition* made in the text may be likewise *verified*.---It is *possible*, as every one will admit, that a Man may be very communicative and liberal out of *mere Ostentation*. Nay, it is not hard to conceive, that from *this* Principle, and to establish a Character eminent for Generosity, he may be *munificent* even to *Excess* and *Prodigality*,  
beyond

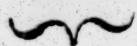




beyond what his Rank and Circumstances, and the demands of his Family and more immediate Dependents, will in Reason and Equity admit of. For there is no Principle more warm and vehement, or that will carry a Man *farther* than Pride ; even sometimes, when Respect and Honour are most likely to be secured by assuming *that Form*, in plausible and specious Arts of *Goodness*. And every Instance of this kind may not only be performed without the *Affections* and *Habits* of *Universal Benevolence*, and *Christian Charity* ; but when the Distresses of the Needy are not *inwardly felt*, nor their Wants *really commiserated* by a *tender* and *relenting* Heart.--- I speak not these things with a view to *depreciate* the Merit of *Bounty to the Poor*, or to give it a *low* and *invidious* turn. It is, without doubt, an *exalted* Pitch of Virtue, and a *Divine* Employment, when it springs from a ~~S~~oul truly *compassionate* and *generous* : And the thought of *degrading* it must be rejected with Disdain and Horror by every one who has a value for *Christianity*, or the spirit, sentiments, and feelings of a *Man*. This, however, must be  
allowed

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allowed to be a natural Inference from what has been said, *viz.* that the *Essence* of Charity does not consist in *Almsgiving*; which forms but an *inconsistent* and *unfinish'd* Character, when it is separated from habitual Justice, Condescension, and Candour, and a friendly Disposition towards *all* our Fellow-creatures. I shall only add under this Head, that a Man of an *uncharitable* Spirit, and who indulges to many *injurious* Vices, may readily *part with his Estate* either to the *Church* (as is frequently seen in *Popish* Countries, where the *Temporal Gain* of pretended Godliness is immensely great) or to the *Poor* (if he thinks that this *Sacrifice* will be equally acceptable) as an *Attonement* for his Immoralities; for Adultery, and Oppression, Fraud, and Malice. And thus a *mere outward Shew* of Charity will, by a prudent management, *cover a multitude of Sins*; and be made to compensate, as a sort of an *Equivalent*, for the real want of Charity.

BUT what shall we say to a Person's giving his *Body to be burned*? --- Is it *possible* for him to be so much in earnest, so firmly  
and



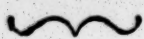
and resolutely attached to the Cause and Interest of *Religion*, and, at the same time, to be a stranger to the *principal* and most *vital* part of it? --- I would no more be understood, in this Branch of my Discourse, to *undervalue* the Fortitude and Constancy of a brave and heroick Sufferer for Truth, than I would be thought, in the former, to have *detracted* from the Excellence and just Praises of Liberality. It cannot be denied, that the bearing so strong and critical a Testimony, undaunted by the violence of *Torture* and the terrors of *Death*, affords a most *probable presumption* of a great Mind, of Honour, Sincerity, and an established Virtue. But that there *may be* Instances of such uncommon Zeal and Courage, where *Charity*, the most necessary constituent in a good Man's Character, is in a great measure wanting ; that some such Instances, I say, *may* happen (which is the only Point that my Argument leads me to prove) will plainly appear from the following Considerations.

FIRST, That we know not what *degrees* of *natural Intrepidity* particular Persons are possessed of, or the *little Value*



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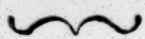
which they set on *Life*. And if either the boldness of their Tempers makes them *desperate*, or their cares and disquietudes prompt them to seek *Death*, their *dying* in a good Cause will have so much the less of *Self-denial* in it; and, consequently, though it demonstrates the Steadiness of their *Resolution*, it will not be so clear an evidence of the Strength of their *Virtue*, as is generally imagined. --- Again, The power of *Enthusiasm* is surprising and unaccountable even in *vicious* Characters. It inspires a frantick zeal, to inflict *severe* and *tormenting* *Pennances* for the expiation of Sin; and it would therefore be no wonder at all, if the *same Principle*, wrought up somewhat *higher*, inspired a resolution to submit to *Death*. --- Or else, a *stubborn Honour* may make a Man chuse rather to *die*, than be *contemned* and *reproached* for Instability and Cowardice, especially, if he is struck with the *peculiar Glory* of the Crown of *Martyrdom*, and believes that his *Sufferings* will intirely obliterate his *Guilt*, and intitle him to an *extraordinary Reward*, notwithstanding all his defects and irregularities. This hope of obtaining

a certain Pardon, and an eminent Degree of Happiness hereafter, is enough to make a *Zelot* and a *Martyr* of one who has, in truth, very little love of Religion, or regard to social Virtue: So that he may give his *Body to be burned*, and yet not have *Charity*. --- As there is no reason to doubt, but that many a wicked *Mahometan* has derived an invincible bravery, and contempt of Death in war, from the encouraging and elevating expectation of being received immediately into *Paradise*, if it was his lot to die fighting for the propagation and advancement of his Religion. Thus have I largely shewn, that the Cases, which St. Paul has supposed in the Text, may both actually happen, and are not mere imagined Cases, to illustrate his subject more strongly, and impress a more efficacious sense of it: And from hence, the following Observations naturally arise.

FIRST, That *Characters* are not to be denominated from single actions, but from the inward *Habits* and *Dispositions* of the Mind, and the general course of Life. A Person, we have seen, may perform some

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very *splendid* and, to outward appearance, heroick Acts of *Virtue*, and not deserve the Character of being a *virtuous* Man.--- He may be *liberal to the Poor*, and not, in the *proper extent* of the phrase, a *charitable* Man.--- He may have the *Patience* and *Fortitude* of a *Martyr*, and not be a *religious* Man,--- and be *abstemious* even to rigour in certain Points, and, on particular occasions, *continent* to admiration, but not, upon the whole, a *chaste* or *temperate* Man.

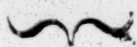
EVERY Action must, in a *moral* estimate, be placed to the *Principle* from which it flows. And, therefore, if an Act of *Beneficence* be performed solely for *Ostentation*, and to gain *Applause*, it is *Selfishness*, and *Pride*, and not *Charity*. And from hence it follows, that though the Characters of Men, if determined and judged of only by their *Conduct*, will frequently appear mixed, and, sometimes, to be tempered with an *equal proportion* of Good and Evil; yet as *one predominant Principle* may govern and influence the whole, the *real* Character may differ from the *apparent* one, and be a more  
*uniform*



uniform Piece than is commonly imagined, whether of Pride, or Avarice, or of Humility, and Benevolence.

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SECONDLY, We learn from the Text, that Religion and Virtue form a *complete* and *consistent* Character: So that a *partial Religion* is in reality an *irreligious* Character; and a *partial Virtue* a *vicious* Character. For the *Sincerity* of our Religion consists in observing the *whole* of Religion; and it is a manifest *contempt* of Virtue, to disregard *any* of its Obligations: And to make *Religion*, in our Practice, a thing *distinct* from *Virtue*, and that can *subsist* without it, directly tends to the destruction of *both*. This is likewise flatly repugnant to what St. Paul has asserted, --- that without *Charity*, the *moral, social,* Virtue of *Charity*, *I am nothing*, and can have no rational ground to hope for the Favour of Almighty God.

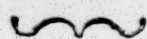
1 Cor. xiii.

2.

AGAIN, If such an *inflexible adherence* to the cause of Christianity as the Text speaks of, though it is of *great use* to the World, by setting before it an example of unshaken Resolution under the most griev-

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ous Sufferings in a good Cause ; if this, I say, be *insignificant* and *unavailing*, where there is not *universal Benevolence* to Mankind : What *Advantage* can be expected from a *blind zeal* for the *Circumstantials* and *Appendages* of Religion, which, instead of exposing *us* to Sufferings, prompts *us* to make *others* suffer,--- which *racks* and *burns* Hereticks, as, to the Scandal of Humanity and the Reproach of the Gospel, is practised by *Religious Savages* in the Church of *Rome*,--- or treats all opponents with scorn and an insulting rudeness, which, to the Disgrace of the Reformation, is too often to be met with in *Protestant* Churches ? Such Behaviour as this, which is not only without *Charity*, but tramples *its* Rules under foot, must be as desparaging to the God and Father of Mercies, as it is infamous to the name and character of a Christian : Whose zeal should be discreet, friendly, and peaceable, --- *warm*, but not *violent* ; *earnest*, but not *raging* and *tempestuous*.

IN the last place, we are naturally led, by the foregoing discourse, to remark the  
*intrin-*



*intrinsick Excellence* of the Christian Religion, and its rational and well-grounded claim to peculiar Veneration and Honour.

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--- The more any System of Religion *heightens* and *extends* the principle of Charity and generous Compassion, the more does it *refine* and *dignify* Human nature; and the more it *improves* and *perfects* Human nature, it must, of consequence, be more *worthy* of G O D. Upon which account, the advocates for the Christian Institution have *wisely* insisted on the *disinterested* and *sublime* strain, the *amiable* properties, the *unconfined* and *universal* influence, of that Scheme of *Benevolence* which it so earnestly inculcates, as strong *presumptive* marks of its truth and Divine original; and have placed these things among the *chief* recommendations of it (not excepting *Miracles* themselves) to every considerate and ingenuous Mind.

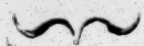
BUT experience teaches us, that there are no truths secure from *misconstruction*; and which ignorance and *minute Philosophy*, a cursory reflection, self-conceit, or perverseness of temper, will not *object* to.

--- Natural Religion itself has not been



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spared.--- And not only have the *Doctrines* of Christianity been represented as romantic and incredible, and its *Miracles* as impostures, or, at best, as the creatures of fancy; but its *Morals*, and even its *Rules of Charity*, have also incurr'd a reproachful censure. I have heretofore endeavoured to give a distinct and full answer to several objections, that have been urged against the Gospel on this very head--- the first by a *noble* and much applauded Author, from its not having recommended directly and by name *private friendship*, and *the love of our Country*\*; and others by a *later* Writer, respecting, particularly, its precepts of *forgiving Injuries*, and *loving Enemies*, and charging many of its rules besides these with being either *irrational*, or too *ambiguous* and *indeterminate*†. And I persuade myself, that it cannot be thought a *needless digression* from my present subject, if I now attempt to remove another difficulty, and (as it seems to me) the only *plausible* one that remains

\* Serm. iii. Vol. I.

† Answer to *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, p. 228—230. 248—256.

to be obviated,--- in order to do *complete* justice to a *noble and important* branch of Christian Morality, and, upon *this topick* at least, to *silence* the most prejudiced and captious Infidel.

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ST. Paul has proposed it to Christians, as a *proper* rule of conduct,---that while, as they had *opportunity*, they were ready to *do good unto ALL MEN*, they should exercise a *distinguished and peculiar* Benevolence to *the* HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. Gal.vi.10.

--- And from hence a *specious* cavil may arise, which, to insinuate itself the more easily, may assume an air of *Generosity*, and freedom from *narrow Prejudices*.

“ To be beneficent to *all men* (it may  
“ be said) is an evident dictate of *Nature*;  
“ but what *reason* can be assigned,  
“ why Christians, *as Christians*, should  
“ have the first and principal share in our  
“ affection? Does not this favour strongly  
“ of a *Party-spirit*? Can it be built  
“ on a generous and ardent desire of the  
“ *universal Good*? --- The Professors of  
“ the Gospel, indeed, are not commanded,  
“ by their Teachers, *absolutely* to *con-*  
“ *fine* their Charity and Good-will to  
“ those

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“ those of their own religion : But is not  
 “ this the *tendency* of the *instruction* which  
 “ they have received ? --- Will not an ex-  
 “ hortation to *do good* ESPECIALLY to  
 “ the *household of faith* make us neglect  
 “ others, whenever we *barely imagine* that  
 “ they stand in *competition* ? And as there  
 “ are scarce any cases, in which our *incli-*  
 “ *nations* and *peculiar attachments* may  
 “ not easily lead us to *fancy* such a com-  
 “ petition ; is it not highly probable, in  
 “ consequence of *this exhortation*, that by  
 “ degrees all, or the far greatest part at  
 “ least, of our offices of Kindness and Hu-  
 “ manity will be restrained and devoted  
 “ to a particular favourite Sect ? ”

To this I answer in general, That  
 though *universal Benevolence* is the ori-  
 ginal and immutable Law of Nature, yet  
 there *ever has* subsisted, and *ever will* sub-  
 sist --- a *difference* of objects. Some will  
 always be *more worthy* of our regard than  
 others. The making a *distinction* therefore  
 can, *in itself*, be no *disgrace* either to moral  
 rules, or private characters. *Nature* has  
 made a *distinction* ; and scarce a single act  
 of Charity can be performed, where *seve-*  
*ral*



ral objects present themselves, without, S E R M.  
upon a comparison of cases, *preferring* XV.  
one, and *rejecting* another. If therefore it  
can be shewn, that there were *good reasons*  
for that particular advice of St. Paul which  
I have undertaken to defend, this will suf-  
ficiently vindicate his character, and, to-  
gether with that, the honour of the Chri-  
stian Religion. --- For, surely, a *too partial*  
and *limited* affection can no more be the  
*just* and *necessary* consequence of a *wise* di-  
stinction proposed by St. Paul, than it is  
of any other wise distinction, to which we  
are directed by *Nature itself*. But to illu-  
strate this point more fully,

I would observe, in the FIRST place,  
That the Apostle's rule, if interpreted on  
his own principles (which is undeniably  
the best way of explaining it) must be  
founded on this maxim: "That the  
" *highest* degrees of *Benevolence* and *Re-*  
" *spect* ought to be expressed to the *wor-*  
" *thiest* characters." The foundation is  
*right* and *unalterable*. --- But which (you  
will say) are to be reckoned the *most worthy*  
characters? ---- Those, undoubtedly, that  
are most eminent for *virtue* and *real good-*  
*ness,*

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ness, and of consequence the most *amiable* and *useful*. --- And how does it appear that *this* was St. Paul's meaning? --- It is scarce possible that he could mean any thing else: Because, if the *Christian character* be *justly* and *consistently* maintained, it must, of necessity, be of the utmost intrinsic Excellence, and publick Advantage. And it cannot be thought, that when *singular* marks of *Esseem* are appropriated to a *particular character*, they were ever intended to be applied to those who *stain* and *diminish* that Character. --- The construction is harsh and unnatural.

ALL Moral Writers, when they would state the *difference* of *Characters*, and fix what is *due* to each, consider them only as they *ought to be*, and not as they are *accidentally corrupted*. Now nothing is more plain than --- that *even an inferior degree of Virtue* is not the *Christian character* duly supported. Nothing is more certain, than --- that *Immorality* quite destroys the *Christian character*; and that *vicious Christians* are, in the Scripture sense of the phrase, *the household of Faith*, very little, if any thing, more, than *professed*  
Infi-

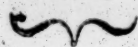


*Infidels.* So that according to all equitable rules of interpretation, St. Paul's words, if they are consider'd as a *standing* maxim designed for *all ages* of the Church, can only be supposed to claim peculiar degrees of Benevolence as due to Christians, when they act with *propriety*, and as their *principles* and *profession* require; *i. e.* when they *shine as Lights in the World*,--- when they are *bright Examples* of those Virtues, which are the *ornament* and *support* of Society.

S E R M.  
XV.  
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AND this account exactly corresponds with other parts of the Christian scheme, which (when it *can be*) ought to be, in strict justice, so interpreted, as to make it *harmonious*, and consistent with itself. *That scheme* supposes, that there are *degrees* of Moral Excellence; and that *these* will be the foundation of the *Divine* favour and rewards, and must, therefore, be the most rational ground of *our* esteem and affection for each other. The *mere name* of a Christian, where the refined spirit and excellent temper of a Christian are not at all cultivated, has no manner of pretence to peculiar honour from God, nor, of course,

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course, any just title to eminent respect from *men*: Nor does it agree with the fundamental and indisputable principles of the Gospel, to imagine *this* to have been St. *Paul's* intention. But if the Christian character was *really* adorned with those *rare* Virtues, which *naturally* belong to it, and of which, as they are *essential ingredients*, the Apostle could not suppose it to be *destitute*; the rule prescribed by him must *then* appear to be not only a plain and direct consequence from the general doctrine of *the Religion of Christ*, but to be a dictate of *reason itself*, and to coincide with *the law of Nature*; since it only claims *that regard*, which is strictly and unalterably *due*, to *singular* and *distinguished merit*.--- We may indeed add to this, that in *every* case, where Moral qualities and all other circumstances are but *barely equal*, a man's being believed to be a *sincere Christian* must give him with another, who is also a *sincere Christian*, an *especial* title to Benevolence and Friendship: For when *nothing* comes in competition --- but the being embarked in the *same* cause, which is believed to be
the

the cause of truth and righteousness,--- and the espousing an *opposite* interest, apprehended to be prejudicial to truth and righteousness,--- *be* that is supposed to be *sincerely on the side* of truth and right must always be *preferred*, for the *same* reasons, for which *truth and right themselves* deserve to be *preferred*; and *any other* conduct would be a manifest *confounding* the *different natures* of things.

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THUS much shall suffice for the *general* consideration of the Subject.--- I shall only observe farther, that there were *some reasons* in a great measure *peculiar* to the *first* ages of Christianity, that render'd the Apostle's advice, which is now the Subject of our Inquiry, highly *expedient*, if not absolutely *necessary*. *These reasons* may all be reduced under this *one* head,---
 " That *Christians* were *then* forced to be
 " a kind of *distinct Society* from the rest
 " of Mankind, and were *despised* and
 " *persecuted* by all the World."--- The *oppressions*, which they groaned under, were a *motive sufficient* to excite a strong sense of compassion, in every generous breast. And their being *oppressed for con-*
science

SERM. *science sake* was a particular, and most
 XV. forcible, recommendation of their case to
 ~~~~~ all the friends of *Virtue*, to all the lovers  
 of *liberty*, to all who were concerned for  
 the *immunities* and *rights* of Conscience,  
 though they were Professors of a *different*  
 Religion; and must have pleaded for a  
*larger* share of Pity and Benevolence,  
 than would be thought necessary to be  
 allowed to *common* objects of distress.  
 Surely then their *Brethren*, who considered  
 them not only as unreasonably insulted  
 and hardly treated on account of their  
 integrity, but as suffering for the  
*honour* of God, and the *maintenance* of his  
*truth*, and, consequently, for the *good* of  
*Mankind*; their *Brethren*, I say, inspired  
 and animated by such sentiments as these,  
 must have been much more inclined ---  
 from all the motives of *religion* -- and *justice*  
 --- and regard to *eminent merit* --- to shew  
 them *uncommon* favour. If they honoured  
 the *cause* in which they *suffered*, they were  
 obliged, in a *proportionable* degree, to love  
 and esteem the *Sufferers*. --- Besides, their  
 being *mutually* involved in the *same* persecutions  
 had a direct tendency to *endear*  
 them



them the more to each other. *Superior* SERM.  
marks of affection were necessary, to main- XV.  
tain their *resolution* and *zeal*. Christians  
had *no relief* but among themselves: And  
therefore if they had not taken a *particu-*  
*lar* care of one another's interests, they  
must not only have been distressed on all  
sides without *any support*; but their *reli-*  
*gion* too, which was then in its *infancy*,  
and struggling with outrageous and most  
formidable *opposition*, would, in all prob-  
ability, have been *totally suppressed*. Upon  
which accounts, nothing could be more  
suitable to the *character* and *circumstances*  
of Christians in *those days*, than, at the  
same time that they carefully cultivated  
*universal Charity*, to devote, in an *especial*  
manner, their Benevolence and Services to  
*the household of Faith*.--- And in the *most*  
*extensive* view of the rule, as prescribed to  
Christians in *every age*, I have already  
shewn that it is perfectly agreeable to  
what *right reason* teaches, and founded on  
a principle, that must *always* direct us, as  
to the *choice of objects*, in expressing our  
affection to *Mankind in general*.

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1 Cor. xv.

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THUS we see, upon the whole, the *perfection* of Christian Benevolence, as well as the indispensable *necessity* of it, in order to constitute a truly *moral* and *religious* character. Let therefore, as the holy Apostle has advised, *all our things be done with Charity*. Let us never suffer this transcendent and illustrious virtue to be *destroyed*, or *weakened*; but use all the proper means to raise it to greater *strength* and *purity*; and carefully avoid whatever tends to *suspend* or *obstruct* its influence, either by introducing the *evil temper* that is *opposite* to it, by clouding and corrupting the *natural sense* of its *immutable* fitness and importance, or causing its dictates to be more *slightly* observed.--- Every one of the least experience and observation must know, that *Moral habits* will not *rise* and *grow* of themselves. They take *root*, and acquire a *fixedness* and *stability*, only by reflection, and repeated acts. By being indulged they naturally *thrive*, and gain, gradually, a *confirmed strength* and *vigour*; but in proportion as they are neglected, they *languish* and *decline*. This is  
the

the *wise*\*, the *fixed*, and, as far as we can possibly conceive, the *invariable* law of Nature, with respect to all *intelligent* and *moral* Creatures.—And from hence this fair conclusion results, that through *mere inattention* and an *indeliberate heedlessness* of temper, men may in a great measure *divest* themselves of the *habit* of *Charity*, and become *insensible* of the wants and distresses of their Fellow-creatures, even though they are not *directly disposed* to be *unfriendly*, or *cruel*. It is therefore necessary for us, to beware of such an unthinking, supine, and kind of

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\* I have called what is mentioned above a *wise* law of Nature, because the making the *continuance* and *force* of Habits to depend upon their *exercise* is, at the same time, an *encouragement* to *virtue*, and a strong *check* to *immorality*. It is an *encouragement* to *virtue*,—as this is a standing *reward* of virtuous actions in the *common course* of Providence, that the *oftener* they are repeated, they are performed with the greater *readiness* and *delight*; and all *impediments* and *difficulties* are *proportionably* removed. And it is a *punishment* of *vice* likewise, interwoven with the *original frame* of the World,—as the *last* evil practice, and criminal gratification, is *always* attended with this *additional* circumstance of *Misery*, that it increases the *disorder* and *depravity* of the Human mind, and lessens its *capacity* of pursuing and enjoying the *purest* and most *substantial* pleasures.

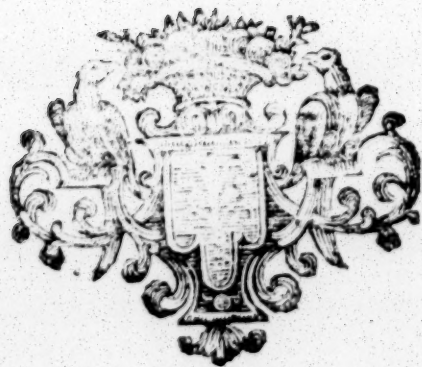


SERMON. lethargick *indolence*, as will *extinguish*  
 XV. that generous concern, which we ought  
 always to feel, for the good of Man-  
 kind. And it is equally necessary, that  
 we never allow ourselves to neglect any  
*single* plain act of Benevolence and Mer-  
 cy; because this has an immediate ten-  
 dency to harden the heart, against the  
 impressions of Humanity and Compassion  
 in *other* instances. — By this last remark,  
 I am naturally led to resume one of the  
 particular subjects treated of in the text,  
 and shall conclude with an observation  
 that is closely connected with it: *viz.*  
 That though what *St. Paul* has proposed  
 is, indeed, a *possible* case, and there *may be*,  
 in some instances, an outward *glittering*  
*show* of *pity* and *goodness* to the *poor*,  
 when the *genuine spirit* of *universal cha-*  
*rity* is not duly cherished and improved;  
 yet it is as certain, on the contrary, that  
 this Divine quality *cannot* subsist, even in  
 the *lowest* degree, where there is a *hard*  
 heart, that is --- not so *sincerely touch'd* by  
 the complaints of the indigent, as to find  
 itself *effectually* prompted to remove, or  
 at least mitigate, their sufferings. --- We  
 are

are at liberty to put on *airs* of *generosity*, and to be as *profuse* and *solemn* in professions of *Kindness* and *Sympathy*, as we please: But to assert, that there may be a *charitable* Man *void* of *Pity*, which excites, on all proper occasions, to *actual Beneficence*, is, in truth, as strong and glaring a contradiction, as it would be --- to talk of an *honest* Man *without Justice*; or of a *wise* Man *without Discretion*.

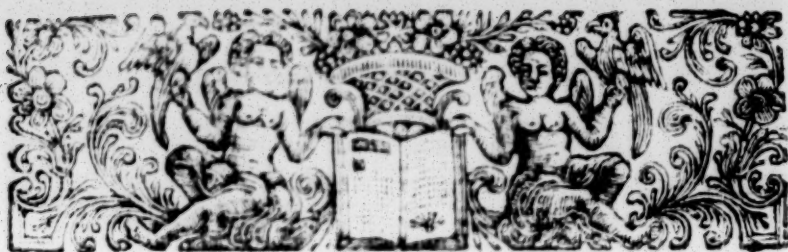
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## S E R M O N XVI.

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The peculiar guilt and infamy of  
prevailing wickedness in an en-  
lightened and polite age.

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JOHN IX. 41.

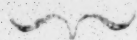
*Jesus said unto them, If ye were  
blind, ye should have no sin;  
but now ye say, WE SEE, there-  
fore your sin remaineth.*

**I**T is scarce possible for the most  
inattentive reader not to observe,  
that the latter part of these  
words of our Blessed Saviour are  
as strictly applicable to *the present age*, as  
if they had been intended for a *prophetic*  
descrip-

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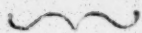


*description* of it: Of which it is represented to be the just, and in many respects the discriminating character, — that it is an age of *light* and *liberty*. Upon this we are apt to *triumph*, and even to proceed so far, as to *insult* the unfortunate ignorance and superstition of our Forefathers; congratulating ourselves, that we were born in happier times, when these thick mists of error, which formerly overspread our native land, are in a great measure *dispelled*. And notwithstanding the danger that there is, in all sorts of this kind, of our running to an *excess*, and claiming *undue* honours through *pride* and *self-flattery*, it must, I think, be admitted as a certain and obvious *fact*, that we *really* enjoy *eminent advantages* for understanding the true nature and design of Religion, and the obligations and extent of Moral goodness. For we have the *unrestrained* use of a Divine revelation to direct us: We are delivered from most of the *grosser* and *more dangerous* mistakes and innovations of Popery, repugnant to the plainest dictates of Reason, and some of them subversive of all the principles of Virtue, by the glorious

glorious Reformation: And by *free* and *publick* disquisitions and searches after truth, hardly *tolerated* in any other nation, nor *known* till *of late*, in the same degree, in our own, the authority of Religion has been clearly stated, unanswerably defended, and settled on its just foundation. These are our privileges. — And what now ought to be our conduct? — To say *We see*, and yet to act as if we were *stark blind*? To make an empty and insolent *ostentation* of our *light*, while we *walk in darkness*? — Is this *rational*? is it *ingenuous*? is it reconcileable with a single spark of *discretion*, or *modesty*? — with the least notion of *refinement* and *elegance* of manners, or of the rules of *right behaviour*? — The common sense of Mankind universally declares the contrary; it immediately condemns the practice as *absurd* and *infamous*: And whenever it is consulted, it must speak to all such perverse and bold offenders in a language like that of the text, — *If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, WE SEE, therefore your sin remaineth.*

SERM.

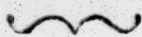
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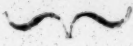
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I HAVE, in another discourse\*, distinctly considered, how far ignorance and error may be pleaded as an *entire excuse*, or in *extenuation*, of an immoral conduct. And from the argument which is there pursued we may easily see, that it could not be the intention of Christ in these words — *If ye were blind, ye should have no sin* — to represent *all ignorance* as absolutely innocent; but that he only speaks of what is *involuntary* and *insuperable*, or at most of *such* instances of it, as spring from prejudices which *insensibly* mislead the mind into wrong judgments, and are consistent with *habitual candour* and *integrity*. I shall not therefore tire you with needless *repetitions*, by insisting any longer on this point; but confine myself to the latter part of the text, which suggests an observation of a different kind: viz. “That sins committed against *knowledge* are most highly *aggravated*; and “that a corruption of manners, and increasing wickedness, in an *enlightened* “age, are attended with *peculiar* circumstances of reproach and *infamy*.”

\* Sermon concerning the *conscious conscience*.

THE FIRST branch of the Proposition SERM.  
 is, "That sins committed against know- XVI.  
 ledge are most highly aggravated." — 

To this, the *universal reason* of Mankind in every age has agreed; nay, the *reason* even of the *vicious* part of Mankind; who have always endeavoured to shelter themselves under the covert of *ignorance*, and thought *that* the best defence which they could make for their Immoralities. And it is no wonder, that none have ever been hardy enough to attempt a *direct* vindication of the crimes which we are now speaking of, since they appear at first sight to be of so heinous and black a nature, as to excite strong *resentment*, *aversion*, and *surprize*; the passions usually moved, when any thing *unnatural* and *monstrous* presents itself. Offences of this kind are *deliberate* and *presumptuous*, and a *wilful* violence offered to the noblest powers of Human nature; they argue a *rooted* contempt of GOD, of Reason, Religion, Conscience, (the most *sacred* ties that bind Mankind) and of all notions of Order and Regularity: Upon  
which

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which accounts they admit of no *Softening*, of no *favourable* circumstances; nor is it possible to invent any *plausible* colours, to *cover* and *disguise* their malignity.

Most other offenders may give their vices a *specious* turn, and find out some *plea* at least to *mitigate* their guilt; which, though it be really lame and defective, may give them a *better opinion* of themselves than they could otherwise entertain, and moderate the *censure* of their Fellow-creatures;—But here they were ignorant of their duty through a *defect* of *Understanding*, and for want of *necessary Instruction*; that, together with this, their *Education* was *lost* and *vicious*; that instead of having *proper* sentiments of *Religion* and *Principle* instilled into their Minds, they were *corrupted* from their *Infancy* by *bad* Principles; and that a constant course of *ill Examples*, and continual *provocations* and *encouragements* to *Licentiousness*, prevented *Reflection*, and suppressed the dictates of *natural Conscience*: Or else, that they had at most but *faint* convictions, and an *indistinct* *confused* sense, of what was right; which were therefore the more easily



*in an enlightened and polite age.*

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easily *over-ruled* by the powerful influence of irregular desires. — By such *excuses* as these, however, upon the whole, feign'd and unavailing, may some of the guilty part of Mankind hope in a great measure to *palliate* their evil practices, and escape the *rigours* of Divine Justice.

SER. M.

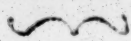
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BUT let *that Man*, who --- with a *full persuasion* of the truth and certainty of the fundamental Principles of Religion, and *exact Notions* of Virtue and Morality --- leads an *Atheistical, leud, dissolute* Life, let, I say, such a *cool and determin'd* offender retire inward to *reflect* his thoughts a little, and then try *what Defence* he can possibly make, with all his *Skill and Subtily*. Let him try by what *Stretch* of fancy, what artful *Reasons*, and false *Glosses*, he shall be able to vindicate himself to *his own Reason*, which strongly points out to him a different Method of Conduct; or to the *impartial Judgment* of *all other* rational Creatures; or, which is of infinitely higher moment, to that *Supreme Being* who made and governs the Universe, and *will*, for all his Disorders, *bring him into Judgment*. --- Certain it is, that

Ecclesi. xii.  
9.

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that there is but *one* course left for him to take, besides exhibiting *no plea* at all, and that is, *frankly to acknowledge*, that he has followed licentious Courses, and the Bent of unruly Appetites, in a *direct* and *resolute* opposition to the *Authority* of his Maker, and to all the rules of *Virtue* and *Decency*. But such a *confession* as this cannot, one would think, be made, by the most abandoned sinner, without some kind of Confusion and Remorse; since it discovers an *incorrigible* depravity of inward temper: Which must, in the *nature* of things, and upon all Principles of *Wisdom* and *Equity*, expose to a very severe Punishment.

Thus it undeniably appears, that Sins committed against *knowledge*, and juster apprehensions of things, are of a *peculiar* and most *complicated* guilt.—I shall now consider the Subject in a somewhat different light, and endeavour to shew, that they form such a notorious *absurdity* and *inconsistency* of character, as is, in an eminent degree, *disgraceful*. Vice is, in itself, the foulest *stain* and *blemish* to a rational nature, debasing and enslaving  
all

all its faculties: But when a corruption of SERM.  
Morals prevails in times that are more XVI.  
*refined and enlightened*, when the Principles  
of Virtue are justly explained, and proved  
to be of unquestionable weight and autho-  
rity, *then* it is, that it rises to the *utmost*  
*point of Infamy*. Suffer me to illustrate this  
truth by a few pertinent and strong *Ex-*  
*amples*, as being the most effectual method,  
that can be taken, to impress a deep and  
lively sense of it.

LET us suppose it then to be a *true de-*  
*scription* of the *present age*, “ That it has  
“ got clear of several *superstitious* preju-  
“ dices, by which *preceding* ages were  
“ held, as it were, in *fetters*, and by a  
“ more *impartial study* of the doctrines  
“ of Revelation, by exercises of *reason*,  
“ and *free inquiry*, has attained to *more*  
“ *worthy* conceptions of the Deity; that  
“ it has discovered *more* of his *Wisdom* and  
“ *Goodness* in the Constitution of Nature,  
“ and can account for many *difficult ap-*  
“ *pearances*, which have been thought a  
“ diminution and reproach to his Moral  
“ Excellencies; and that, instead of enter-  
“ taining *gloomy* and *hideous* notions of  
“ him,



SERM. " him, as an arbitrary, stern, inexorable  
 XVI. " Being, or having but a *partial* view of  
 ~~~~~ " his attributes, it considers them in their  
 " natural and beautiful *harmony*, and has
 " acquired *sublime* and *amiable* apprehen-
 " sions of his Perfections, and of the
 " scheme and operations of his Provi-
 " dence" --- If this, I say, be the *real cha-*
*ra*cter of the Men of the *present* age, or if
 it be a character which they lay *claim* to,
 one would naturally expect from hence ---
 to find *every possible token* of *esteem* and
honour paid to the infinite Creator and
 Judge of all, and the utmost *reverence*
 and *exactness* in the offices of *piety* and
devotion. And it must be *indecent* to the
 last degree, it must appear shocking to
 our first reflections, " If instead of men-
 " tioning the *name* of this eternal and
 " most excellent Being, who supports
 " the fabrick of the Universe, and is the
 " only origin of Good, with Veneration
 " and Respect; they make it a *bye-word*,
 " introducing it, on the most *impertinent*
 " occasions, to give a pretended *force* and
 " *energy* to their discourse, and fill up the
 " *blank spaces* of it, nay, use to heighten
 " an

in an enlightened and polite age.

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“ an idle jest, and mix it with the very
“ *follics* and *vices* of their Conversation :
“ And if they treat his *Laces*, his *Provi-*
“ *dence*, and the solemnities of his *Wor-*
“ *ship*, with indignity and contempt.”

S E R M.

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AGAIN, If we allow the age, in which
we live, “ To *understand thoroughly* the
“ rules and measures of *justice*, and to
“ be much improved in the *speculative*
“ *Science* of the Principles of *Generosity*
“ and *Benevolence*; and especially, if it
“ lays such an undue Stress on exercises
“ of *Humanity* and the *social Virtues*,
“ as to make them include the whole
“ substance both of Religion and Mora-
“ lity :” It will of necessity render itself
so much the *more infamous* ---- “ If it
“ practises Undermining and Treachery,
“ and the mean artifices of Fraud and
“ Deceit, and indulges a spirit of Selfish-
“ ness and Cruelty; or if it represents
“ Pride and Revenge as *heroick* accom-
“ plishments; determines *inconsiderable*,
“ *imaginary*, and perhaps *deserved* af-
“ fronts to be capital crimes; and recom-
“ mends it as a point of *honour* (as *fan-*
“ *tastick* and *ridiculous* indeed, as it is

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Cc

mis-

SERM.

XVI.



“ *mischievous*) to thirst for blood, to add
 “ to the number of disconsolate Widows
 “ and helpless Orphans, and for private
 “ Subjects to redress their own grievances,
 “ and both to judge and punish offend-
 “ ers, against the fundamental Laws of
 “ all regular Societies.”

LET us change the example once more, and suppose it to be *the Character of this same age*, “ To *speak* of the *ra-*
 “ *tional* Principle in Man in terms of
 “ very great *regard* and *distinction*, to
 “ be *fond*, both in their discourses and
 “ writings, to *magnify* its dignity, to *ex-*
 “ *patiate* on its high original, its noble
 “ properties, and superior excellence above
 “ the animal and sensitive Nature; as
 “ its Employments are more sublime
 “ and honourable, and its Pleasures more
 “ solid, generous, and lasting.”---- The
age, of which this is a *just* description,
 must surely *blush* and be *confounded*, un-
 less it has utterly extinguished every mo-
 dest and ingenuous impression; if, with
 all these *exalted* speculations, and *magni-*
ficent encomiums, on the privileges and
 pleasures of Reason, --- “ It gives way
 “ to

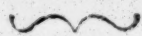
in an enlightened and polite age.

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“ to a *soft effeminate* gaiety, and is abandoned to *luxury* and *lewdness*; which
“ obscure the *light*, and destroy the *influence*, of *Reason*, and allow to *Sense*,
“ and *brutal Appetite*, the supreme command.”

SERM.

XVI.



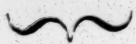
ALL these are obvious truths, where there are the least remains of sedateness, and impartial thought. But, indeed, if we ourselves are *grossly tainted*, our self-love and partiality in our own favour, joined with the force of bad Habits, may very much bias and darken our judgment.--- Let us therefore, in imagination, substitute some *upright* judges, who are entirely *out of the scene of corruption*, and let them be told, that there were a People, *enlightened* in all respects as *this age* has been represented, and I believe *imagines itself*, to be, “ Who
“ notwithstanding their *just reasonings*
“ concerning the Nature of God, and
“ the *honourable opinion* which they expressed of his Perfections and Providence, neither *reverenced* his sovereign
“ Power and Greatness, nor rendered
“ him that *love, adoration, and grati-*

Cc 2

tude,

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“ *tude*, which are due to his absolute and
 “ universal Goodness, neither imitated his
 “ *example*, nor were solicitous about se-
 “ curing his *Favour*, nor afraid of incur-
 “ ring his *Displeasure*; and who, though
 “ they acknowledged the immutable obli-
 “ gations of *justice* and *fidelity*, and not-
 “ withstanding their seemingly *disinte-*
 “ *rested* and *generous* lectures of *benevo-*
 “ *lence*, scrupled not the *violence* of the
 “ *adulterer*, nor the blasting *virgin inno-*
 “ *cence*, and robbing it of its *purity* and
 “ *honour*; nor were *mov'd* by the *wants*
 “ of the poor, and the *sighs* of the af-
 “ flicted and disconsolate” --- If, I say,
impartial judges, who had never been
witnesses to any *examples* of such unnat-
 tural and surprizing *inconsistency*, were
 to be told, that a people, who valued
 themselves on their exact knowledge of
 religion and morality, acted so *scandalous*
 and *indecent* a part: They must think it
scarce credible, and would be led to sus-
 pect that it was *excessively aggravated*;
 either to vilify Human Nature itself, or
 by national prejudices, by the spleen of
 Parties, or private malice.

SHOULD

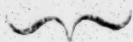
SHOULD it be said, that the case, which I have put, is really *strained*, and *heightened* by *too strong* colours, because there never was *any* nation of men so *universally* deprav'd --- I answer, that as it is *possible*, in the nature of the thing itself, that such degeneracy and flagrant corruption of manners may be *universal*, from the same causes through which it happens in *a single* instance; it cannot be improper to *represent* the case, even though it never *actually* happen'd, in order to display the general argument, which I am now pursuing, in a more *clear* and *lively* view. Besides, we may fairly draw this conclusion from it, which is directly to our present purpose: That --- as vice cannot be *infamous* when it is *universal*, unless it be so likewise in *every particular* example of it --- exactly in *proportion* to the *number* of instances, as well as to the *degree* of *excess*, in which it prevails, it must bring *shame* and *disgrace* along with it; and ought therefore, in every shape, to be avoided with a generous indignation and contempt, and to be *banish'd* out of all nations, where

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any *knowledge* of religion, any *sense* of virtue and morality, and the *outward appearances* of civility are retain'd.

I know not *how* it happens, but *so* it *really is* in these parts of the World, that with refinements of *knowledge*, there have advanc'd, almost in *equal* degrees, refinements in *luxury*. The poor Heathens, following the *sole* guidance of nature, and being *rude* and *untaught* in *this* as well as other *arts* of life, were contented with what the necessities of Nature required: And for this, we have thought fit to call them---SAVAGES. And yet, for a much *worse* conduct in my opinion, *i. e.* for *contriving* new ways of gratifying the animal part to the prejudice and dishonour of the rational, new ways of *enfeebling* the strength and vigour of the mind, of *inflaming* the passions, and *trifling* away life in empty ostentation; we stile ourselves---POLITE. Whereas, in truth, *outward forms* of *Politeness* are capricious and variable; and *then only* is it a name of any *valuable* significance, when Human nature itself is *polish'd*; when the soul is purg'd from all habits of wickedness,

in an enlightened and polite age.

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ness, and adorn'd with good dispositions, and the appetites are kept in a regular state of subjection. So that a life spent in wantonness and luxury, and giving a loose to sensual inclinations, is so far from being the natural dictate of *wisdom*, and a *good understanding*, that it is a *scandalous irregularity*, for which *ignorance* is the *best and only excuse*; and ought to be *confin'd* to those *barbarous nations* (if there are any such) who, for want of better instruction, have no *hope of immortality*, no *idea of intellectual and moral pleasures*, nor of any thing *higher* than sense and animal gratifications.--- And thus it appears, upon the whole, that the *knowledge and practice* of religion are in *reason*, and *common decency*, inseparably connected; and that if we pretend to an *enlightened mind*, and *right sentiments* of virtue and piety, and pursue at the same time, *immoral and licentious courses*, we are not only more *criminal*, but much more *despicable*, if our pretence be just --- "than either the *vitious* without "*Knowledge*----or the *ignorant* without "*Vice.*"

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Eph. v. 8.

LET us then answer the character which we *assume*, and *shew* ourselves to be, indeed, *children of LIGHT*, by a conduct that will bear the *light of reason*, by actions, as well as principles, that will approve them to be *right*, upon a cool and unbiass'd examination. Let us *shew* that our notions of *Morality* are really *refined*, by an exemplary *propriety* and *strictness* of behaviour; and by *excelling* especially in those virtues which are the most *ornamental* parts of the Moral and Christian character --- That we may not be *Believers*, and *civilized persons*, merely in speculation and profession; but appear like *Infidels*, and *Barbarians*, in our practice. Let us *shew*, --- That we *understand* our relation to the *Supreme Being*, and have a *becoming sense* of his infinite excellencies; by an inward, humble, and affectionate veneration and esteem of him, a calm and absolute submission to his Providence, and all the just expressions of a genuine and unaffected piety ----- That we *understand* our relation to the rest of *Mankind*; by an uninterrupted course of probity, truth, generosity, and mercy --- That

That we understand the *true value* of *Human Nature*; by doing nothing that will eclipse and debase its dignity, by avoiding the mean and sordid pursuits of avarice, every excess of the inferior appetites, and all unmanly pleasures. In a word, Let us *shew*, that we believe the *reasonableness* of Religion, by *conforming* to the *rules* of it; and not be so strangely absurd as to recommend, and plead for, a *rational* Religion, which we do not think it *fit* for us to *practise*: For by this means, the name of *Reason* is render'd *frightful* to the weak and injudicious; and the name of *Piety* is *ridicul'd* by the Libertine.---- But then shall we be able, with a *good grace*, to *defend* the cause of religion by our *arguments*, when we *adorn* it by our *example*. We shall silence the *clamours* of the ignorant, and soften the *prejudices* of the vicious. We shall be *applauded* by ourselves, and *esteemed* by others. We shall be supported under the *various exigencies* of life, and fortified against the *terrors* of death. For if we maintain our character with such *consistency* and *honour*, we may, with a serene

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S E R M. rene and undaunted confidence, look forward to that awful day, in which the
 XVI. Eternal God, appearing in supreme glory and majesty, will *equitably decide* the fate of all Mankind, and *render to every one according to his deeds.*---When they, who have made a suitable improvement of the light and advantages which they here enjoy'd, shall be crown'd with glory, and honour, and immortality; but that servant, who KNEW his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with MANY stripes.

Rom. ii.
6.

ver. 7.

Luke xii.
47.

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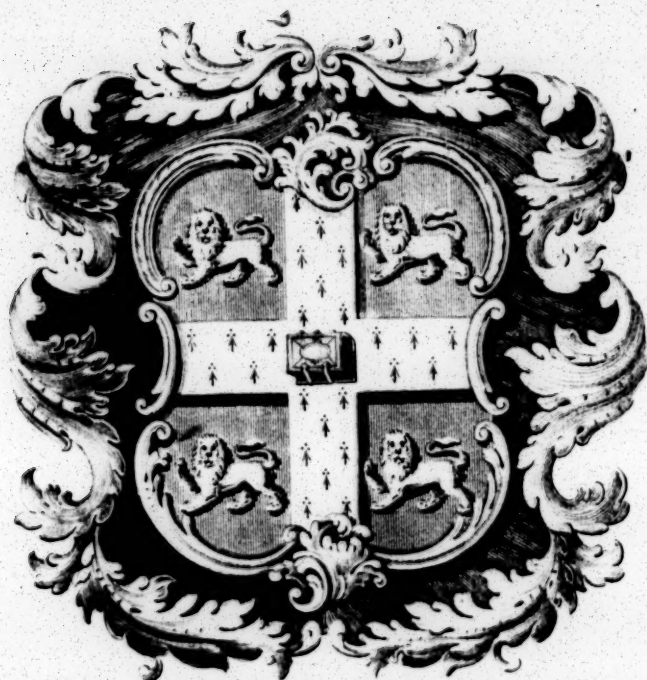
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